Hafa Adai!

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Torres: We are working on workforce issues. **PAGE 3**
2 are first graduates of CNMI Drug Court Program. **PAGE 5**

75¢

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown, front row center, pose for a group photo with presenters, judges, justices, and lawyers during the 24th Annual District Conference held at the Kanoa Resort last Saturday.

Tourist drowns at Lau Lau Bay

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

» Group of Japanese bystanders tried to rescue male victim

Another drowning case happened on Saipan. This time the incident occurred Friday afternoon at Lau Lau Bay involving a 32-year-old male Chinese tourist.

The victim, Tian Tao, was pronounced dead at the Commonwealth Health Center at 2:24pm.

Derek Gersonde, spokesman for the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Servicen, said an investigation showed that Tao and his wife had gone to Lau Lau Bay that afternoon on a rented a vehicle and without a guide. Tao went swimming while his wife stayed ashore.

The wife later shouted for help after noticing that her husband, who had gone underwater near the reef, failed to surface after several min-

See TOURIST on Page 4

IN CONTINUED SEARCH FOR LUHK SISTERS

Police also searched WW2 tank in Kagman

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Two weeks after police and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents dug up the backyard of a house in Koblerville to look for the possible remains of missing sisters Faloma and Maleina Luhk last Feb. 17, police also searched a World War II-era concrete storage tank in Kagman, but again failed to find the two.

A video released by the Department of Public Safety information office showed officers using a backhoe to open the tank, reportedly located in an abandoned lot. The digging was done last March 2.

DPS spokesperson Jacqueline Rae Shepard disclosed in the video that police officers and FBI agents searched a home in Koblerville early last month as part of the revived search for the missing Luhk sisters.

That was the first search efforts for the Luhk sisters since 2011, Shepard said.

Two weeks later, an anonymous tip led DPS officers to the abandoned lot

See POLICE on Page 4

CW bill heads to US Senate floor

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

» Substitute bill reported out

Legislation to extend the transition period of the CNMI foreign worker program beyond Dec. 31, 2019, now heads to the U.S. Senate after the U.S. Senate Committee tasked with reviewing the bill reported it out last week.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, chaired by U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), ordered S.2325—which she also introduced—to be reported out by the committee during their meeting in Washington, D.C. last Thursday.

According to the U.S. Congress website, the committee ordered the bill to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All that remains for S.2325 to be enacted into law is passage in the

See CW on Page 4

3 get prison terms in labor scam case

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

» 3 get prison sentences for mail fraud, fraud in foreign labor contracting, visa fraud

Businessman David Trung Quoc Phan was slapped Friday with a prison term of eight months in prison, while his two co-defendants were sentenced to much longer prison sentences after being convicted of bringing Bangladeshi men to Saipan on promises of good-paying jobs and green cards in exchange for cash.

After his eight-month sentence, Phan will be placed on two years of

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INSIDE

WORLD
For some former foes of Russian President Vladimir Putin, a move west has been lethal.

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FOCUS
A less-known and potentially more devastating is the exodus of well-paying white-collar jobs.

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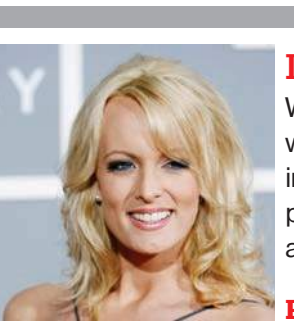

LIFE & STYLE
Watchdog group wants the DOJ to investigate Trump's payment to a porn actress.

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Local

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Roadside tribute tomorrow

Mount Carmel School's AlumKnight Association invites all AlumKnights, Knights, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, families, and friends to pay tribute to the late bishop emeritus Tomas Camacho on the day of his funeral. Wear blue and meet at 7:15am tomorrow, March 13, 2018, near the Naked Fish parking grounds for the roadside tribute. The president of the AlumKnight Association, Charles Cepeda, has offered to prepare a banner for this occasion. ***(PR)***

LOTTERY

PACIFIC GOLD

RESULTS

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Military training in Guam and CNMI

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. military will conduct training at Warning Area 12 and Warning Area 517 on March 12 from 6am to 6pm

The military will also conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla during the following dates and times:

- March 12 and 14 from 9am to 9pm
- March 13 from 1-9pm
- March 15 from 9am to 11:55pm
- March 16 from 9am to 6pm
- Training will also be conducted at the former Adm. Nimitz Golf Course in Barrigada March 13 from 8am to 6pm

These types of trainings are designed to enhance the readiness of military personnel. Residents in surrounding areas should not be alarmed if they see or hear increased activity associated with the training. It is recommended the public, fishermen and marine tour operators monitor the Coast Guard broadcast notice to mariners for advisories.

W-12 begins south of Guam and extends south-southwest in international waters. W-517 is activated south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Banks are open for public use.

The location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be in a 12-nautical mile radius of the island. ***(PR)***

UOG to mark 50th Charter Day on March 13

The University of Guam will celebrate its 50th Charter Day on Tuesday, March 13. Opening ceremonies begin at 9am in the center courtyard, and activities run throughout the day until 5pm. The event is open to the public. The theme is "Green is the New Gold" which recognizes the official color of UOG. Each year, Charter Day is the largest public event at the university with nearly 5,000 people visiting the campus. For a list of activities and downloads, visit www.uog.edu/charterday. ***(PR)***

Junior high mock trial on April 7

The 13th Annual Junior High Mock Trial will take place on Saturday, April 7, from 8am to 12pm, at the CNMI courthouse, where middle school students of the CNMI will be arguing a fictitious case of a shoot out between agents of the Drug Enforcement Agency and a farmer. This year there will be 10 schools participating. Schools will be paired in rounds, which will be presided by a judge. The CNMI Junior High Mock Trial is a signature program of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council where students learn about the law and standard courtroom procedures in a non-competitive format. The program is free and open to the public. The CNMI Junior High Mock Trial is made possible through funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and in partnership with the CNMI Public School System and the CNMI Judiciary. For more information, call Council staff at 235-4785. ***(PR)***

Philippine consular outreach

The Philippine Consulate General in Guam will be holding a mobile consular outreach on Saipan on March 13-15, at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe. Note that all e-passport applications require the personal appearance of the applicant. Please wear proper attire (i.e., shirt with collar). For more information and confirmation, call (670)233-6293 and ask for Mel Santos. ***(PR)***

Free business seminar for veterans & spouses

The CNMI Military/Veteran's Affairs Office and the Small Business Development Center will be offering a free business seminar called "Reboot to Business" at Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan's Azucena Room on March 26, from 9am to 4pm, presented by Dennis Kwak, director, Veterans Business Outreach Center of the Pacific. To register, contact Velma Del Rosario at 664-2650 or visit https://sbavets.force.com/s/. ***(PR)***

Torres: We are working on workforce issues

Despite negative reports about the CNMI workforce issues, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres assured that his administration and CNMI government is doing its best to address those labor issues.

The national media picked up on the U.S. Department of Labor's settlement with four Chinese companies, but the CNMI government is exerting more effort to prevent a repeat of that fiasco, Torres said.

"What we are doing now is our Department of Labor here has access to [documentation of the] workforce [that are here] now to make sure their documents are proper," he said. "We are coming out with a communication making sure that when [DOL] comes to their business, the documentation of workers are readily available."

The increased effort seeks to prevent a repeat of what had happened in the case of MCC International, Gold Mantis Construction Decoration, Beilida Engineering, and Sino Great Wall International when workers were brought in as tourists.

The USDOL entered into a settlement agreement with the four companies last week to pay about $14 million to over 2,400 workers who have yet to receive back pay.

Torres is sure that the negative reports arising from the settlement has had an effect. "However, we must remain cognizant that as much as we have progress, this is a setback that we still need to address. We don't have a perfect government and we don't have a perfect…economy. We are striving and we are doing well, and issues like this need to be addressed along the way," he said. "I don't think it should stop our progress." ***(Erwin Encinares)***

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CHCC asks for $15.5M for uncompensated care

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. is pulling no punches in its budget demands for fiscal year 2019.

Aside from the over $14 million it asked for the local share of Medicaid funds, CHCC is also asking the Legislature to fund uncompensated care to the tune of more than $15 million.

In its $29.8-million budget request for fiscal year 2019 that was approved by the CHCC board of trustees Wednesday night, $15,555,006 is under uncompensated care. That is on top of the $14,062,500 CHCC is asking the government to pay for its local share of Medicaid funds.

"Prior to all the allowances and removals from our revenue, we are projecting a little more than $86 million in revenue for [fiscal year] 2019. However if you take into account bad debts and contractual adjustments that is part of the insurance industry, uncompensated care is projected to cost us $15.5 million for fiscal year 2019. CNMI Medicaid share, which is a 45-percent share we may not receive, is $14.6 million," CHCC chief financial officer Derek Sasamoto told the board.

Rounding out the $29.8-million budget request is $250,000 for services CHCC renders to the Department of Corrections for the care of prisoners.

Sasamoto told the board that out of the $86.2 million in revenues CHCC is projecting for FY 2019, they're looking at revenues of only $43.5 million when one factors in bad debt and contractual adjustments.

"We're going to ask for a significant amount from the Legislature but majority or essentially 99 percent of that is covered by the local Medicaid match and uncompensated care. Those two account for more than $29.5 million in lost revenue. So we're going to request that from the Legislature. It is actually funds that we should be getting and costs due to uncompensated care that we're mandated to cover, which rightfully we should ask for as $29.5 million is a large amount," he said.

SCAM

From Page 1

supervised release. He was not required to pay restitution to the victims, however. U.S. District Court for the NMI designated Judge John C. Coughenour said the testimonies showed that Phan did not collect recruitment fees from the victims.

As for Muksedur Rahman, the judge sentenced him to 48 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

His brother, Rafiqul Islam, was sentenced to 18 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

Coughenour ordered Rahman and Islam to jointly pay restitution to the victims.

The judge praised the victims for coming forward and testifying truthfully. Coughenour, however, noted that, in other parts of the world, particularly in Southeast Asia, where he has a family, inappropriate payments are common.

The judge said that Rahman and Islam, who have been working in the CNMI for a long time, will be deported after serving their sentences. Coughenour said this a significant hardship as the two will be separated from their young children.

He said the three have no criminal history and it's one of the factors he considered.

The judge also noted one recent instance in which Rahman found a wallet that contained $4,000 cash and returned it to the owner. Coughenour said it would have been easy for Rahman to just keep the wallet and money as nobody knew about it and there was no video.

Coughenour said he experienced losing his wallet and it was found on the street and returned to him minus the money.

Assistant U.S. attorney James Benedetto, counsel for the U.S. government, recommended 30 months imprisonment or two years and six months for Phan, 120 months or 10 years imprisonment for Rahman, and 37 months or three years and one month for Islam.

Benedetto also asked the court to hold the defendants liable to pay restitution to the victims, along with other victims in a separate recruitment scheme.

Steven Pixley, counsel for the 54-year-old Phan, said they are happy with his client's sentence.

Pixley said the judge considered all the factors and found that Phan's role was minimal as he never went to Bangladesh and that it was very clear he was not involved in money transactions.

Pixley said Phan, however, has an option to appeal.

Robert Torres, counsel for Rahman, said the court has the discretion under the law and that they feel that Coughenour applied those factors.

Torres said the U.S. government was arguing a range far beyond what they (him and Rahman) believe to be reasonable and more than necessary.

"We feel that the court ultimately landed at a sentence that was not only reasonable but humane. The court listened to everyone; it did not disregard anyone," Torres said.

Torres said the judge ultimately found Rahman's presence of 22 years in the Commonwealth, even his recent act of finding a wallet with $4,000 in it and returning it, to be indicative of those character that one act did not besmirch that character.

While Rahman regrets his conviction, he looks forward to his redemption and apologizes to the victims for the harm on them, and wishes them well, he said

"We look forward to what we can do on appeal but we appreciate the court's sentence today," Torres said.

Bruce Berline, counsel for the 38-year-old Islam, said he believes that the judge took into consideration all the relevant factors, especially the cultural differences and prevalence of cultural monetary practices.

"I think that's relevant. I think he gave Mr. Islam a very fair and appropriate sentence. We're happy," Berline said.

He, however, stated that appeals in this type are pretty much automatic, just a review by the higher court.

Last Oct. 18, the jury found Phan guilty of two counts of mail fraud, three counts of fraud in foreign labor contracting, and one count of fraud and misuse of visas and permits.

Rahman, a welder, was found guilty of two counts of mail fraud and three counts of fraud in foreign labor contracting.

Islam, a welder, was found guilty of one count of mail fraud and three counts of fraud in foreign labor contracting.

Assistant U.S. attorneys Eric O'Malley and James Benedetto prosecuted the case.

Benedetto said every CW-1 permit approved for a sham employer for a non-existent job represents one less nurse at the Commonwealth Health Center, one less power plant operator for the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., or one less worker for the CNMI economy.

After the prosecution rested its case during the trial, Phan's fiancée, Analyn Nunez and Rahman's wife, Shahinur Akter, were acquitted. Defendant Zeaur Rahman Dalu pleaded guilty.

According to the U.S. government, each of the victims paid over $10,000, but when they arrived on Saipan in April of 2016, they were not given work as promised.

The government named five victims, all Bangladeshis, in the case.

CW

From Page 1

U.S. Senate, the U.S. House committee tasked to review it, the U.S. House, and U.S. President Donald J. Trump's signature.

In a statement soon after the bill went out of the committee, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) said the bicameral, bipartisan working group that drafted the original bill, along with representatives of federal agencies and the Commonwealth government and input from additional congressional committees, worked intensively on revising the bill to make sure it does what it is intended to do and can win passage in Congress.

"All the key provisions from the Act as introduced remain," Sablan said. "The transition program continues for another 10 years. We add 8,001 CW permits for 2019, lifting the cap to 13,000. Local workers are protected from unfair competition by cheap foreign labor. Local businesses will not be undercut by bad actors who use up hundreds of CW permits. And CW workers who have worked lawfully and contributed to our community over the years will be eligible for special treatment with a renewable, three-year permit.

"We had a good bill when we introduced the Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act seven weeks ago. We have an even better bill now," said Sablan. "But there is still much work to do in the Senate and then in the House. And nothing is for certain."

In a statement, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said he remains thankful to Murkowski for directing its passage and action on the U.S. Senate floor for consideration.

"Through recommendations that myself, my office, the Legislature, the [Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp.], and our community, we now have a bill that is better than it was before: a bill that provides relief for businesses, employees, and families and will allow our progress to continue so that we can get more opportunities for U.S. workers," the statement added.

S.2325 seeks to extend the CNMI transition period to 2029, effectively extending the CW program and the E-2C investor program. According to documents *Saipan Tribune* obtained last week, S.2325 drops the term CW-3, which allows its holders work eligibility for a period of three years and is renewed every three years. Instead, the new bill allows the issuance of CW-1 permits with a three-year validity.

A separate statement from the Torres administration said: "As a point of clarification, the CW-3 permit was not 'dropped' during the markup process. The original intent and substance from the CW-3 language is still there in a subsection on page 17 of the bill labeled, '(B) Long-term workers.' It's referred to more accurately protect long-term workers and CW workers who have contributed to our community and economy since [fiscal year] 2015. This was recommended by the governor from the beginning of this legislative process to fix the problems caused by H.R. 339."

The substitute also bumped up the CW cap for fiscal year 2019 up to 13,000, with reductions of 500 each year up to fiscal year 2023. From fiscal year 2024 onwards, the CW cap reductions would be at 1,000 annually, while the CW cap for fiscal year 2030 would be set at 1,000 and is only valid during the first quarter.

TOURIST

From Page 1

utes. A group of male Japanese bystanders swam to the spot and pulled the victim to shore.

A DFEMS ambulance responded after receiving a 911 call at 1:55pm.

Gersonde said DFEMS emergency medical technicians tried to revive Tao in the ambulance, performing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation on him until they reached CHC at 2:18pm.

Witnesses said a group of teenagers carried the victim from the reef to the shore. Police and an ambulance then arrived. Medics applied CPR for a few minutes, then transported the victim to the hospital.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Jacqueline Rae Shepard said yesterday that when DPS officers arrived at the scene, they found the victim motionless on the beach.

Shepard said the officers immediately performed CPR on the victim until the DFEMS medics came and brought the victim to CHC.

Shepard said that, according to witnesses, the victim and his wife arrived at the beach at 1:30pm. She said the victim swam out toward the channel while his wife stayed ashore. Soon after, the victim yelled for help as he was being pulled out to open water.

The wife signaled four other swimmers for help, and the four swam out to the channel in an attempt to rescue the victim. The swimmers found the victim floating motionless and pulled him back to shore and called police.

Shepard said that CHC personnel also tried to revive the victim but failed to do so.

Last Feb. 23, a 25-year-old Korean male tourist who was swimming with three companions was swept by a wave at Forbidden Island in Kagman. Search and rescue team backed up by a Navy helicopter failed to locate the body.

Last Jan. 13, a Korean tourist drowned while her husband was swept by waves and could not be found at Forbidden Island.

POLICE

From Page 1

in Kagman, she said.

Shepard said that, according to the tipster, the bodies of the sisters can be found inside the tank in that abandoned lot in Kagman.

Shepard said that officers dug and sifted every piece of debris inside the tank for eight hours but the remains of the Luhk sisters were not found.

"There are no clues as to where they might be and once again the case goes cold," she said.

For the safety of Kagman residents, she said, the tank is now closed but the case of the missing sisters remains open.

Shepard said Faloma and Malein Luhk will be 16 and 17 years old by now and DPS detectives said they will continue to work to try to find answers, close the case, and give the family the answers they need.

With respect to the Feb. 17 search in Koblerville, the Crisostomo family said the police's and FBI's search on their property was laughable but also shamed the family.

In her declaration filed in Superior Court, Annie A. Crisostomo said the police and FBI found nothing during the search of the property.

In her declaration, Evelyn A. Crisostomo said her entire family is in shock and that they are deeply ashamed because of the search.

Annie and Evelyn Crisostomo's declarations were attached in the Crisostomo family's motion for the Superior Court to unseal the search warrant.

Attorney Janet H. King filed the motion as counsel for siblings Joseph, Annie, Evelyn, and Calistro Crisostomo.

King said the Crisostomo family had their lives suddenly disrupted by a very public search of their property and that no members of the family have been charged with any crimes related to the search.

This coming May 25 marks the seventh year of the mysterious disappearance of the Luhk sisters near a school bus pavilion in As Teo, with still no trace of the children.

2 are first graduates of CNMI Drug Court Program

» 1 participant is now a Customs officer

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio poses for a group photo with, to her left, Jesse Aguon Villagomez, who is among the first two graduates of the CNMI Drug Court Program, and members of the Drug Court at Thursday's graduation ceremony in Superior Court. Also joining them is National Drug Court Institute Division Director Vanessa Price, front row, second from left.
FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Two persons, including one who is now a Customs officer, have been sober and have met all conditions without any violation since they joined the CNMI Drug Court Program in December 2016, making them the first graduates of the treatment program.

Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio, who has been presiding over the Drug Court sessions, granted the government's motion to drop the illegal possession of controlled substance charges filed against Jesse Aguon Villagomez and the Customs officer, who was not named.

Kim-Tenorio recalled that when they started the program they were not sure about the kind of participants they would get, what the journey would be like, and when the participants would graduate.

Kim-Tenorio was also not sure what the conditions of the participants would be when they graduate.

"But here we are. Wow… I'm so proud of them. In a matter of a year and just a couple of months, they got jobs, they're self-sufficient. One is a law enforcer, the other guy is gainfully employed," the judge said.

She said the other graduate regained custody of his four children and his employer pays him well and trusts him.

"They are doing so well. This is why our treatment courts work," Kim-Tenorio said, adding that she believes in not just having a drug court but also other treatment courts such as for driving while under the influence and others.

Treatment courts make an impact, she said, by giving participants a second chance, preparing them instead of just saying "here you go, good luck!"

"I'm very happy and I look forward to continue tracking their progress beyond drug courts to see how they do. But I have no doubt these two graduates will do very well," she added.

In his keynote address, Superior Court Presiding Judge Robert C. Naraja said it took some time to make the Drug Court happen and the Judiciary and the Commonwealth get to finally realize the fruits of its labors. Naraja said the process of instituting the Drug Court started over 10 years ago.

"Now, after years of diligent work by members of all three branches of government, we have our first graduates from the program," he said.

Naraja said that drug addiction has long been a problem in the Commonwealth. Now, he said, the Commonwealth is equipped with the treatment and justice tools needed to make a significant dent on this plague.

"These tools allow us to not only treat the individual, but to rebuild the familial bonds that are ravaged by this terrible problem," the judge said.

Drug Court coordinator TaAnn T. Kabua said the two graduates are part of the eight original participants of the program. Of the eight, only one was terminated from the program, she said.

Kabua said the program will have new graduates again this July or August.

Including five who were accepted to the program last Thursday, the program now has a total of 41 participants. She said they also have a waiting list of 12 persons.

"The program is up to 24 months. But depending on your progress, with Jesse and the other graduate, they graduated early," she said.

Kabua said the two graduates did not have any positive test for illegal drugs and only had very minor program violations like late calling.

"We promote the safety of the public so when we do curfew check, they call in, either they're in compliance or they're way above compliance," she said. "It really shows to everyone that our participants are doing well with the support of our treatment providers, the case workers, and everybody in the drug court team."

Kabua added that the participants' interaction with Kim-Tenorio is not traditional as they are able to converse freely in court. She said the judge listens at a minimum of three minutes per participants when they come in front of her.

The Drug Court held its first session on Dec. 22, 2016.

Drug Court caseworker Jaclyn T. Mendiola and Marianas Behavioral Health International Inc. counselor Grace S. Vaiagae spoke about the accomplishments of the two participants and the phases of the treatment program.

National Drug Court Institute division director Vanessa Price made a special presentation by giving a symbolic gavel as a gift for Kim-Tenorio in recognition of the program's success.

Police Officer III Frederick Sato made a case summary, such as how the two graduates were arrested, how they started the program, and how they're determined to complete the program, among other things.

Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro, Naraja, and Kim-Tenorio presented certificates of completion to the two graduates.

Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres, some lawmakers and Cabinet members, along with judges and justices and community leaders, attended the ceremony.

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has a separate drug court program called the Drug Offender Re-entry Program. Of the six DORE participants, three of them have already been terminated for continued drug use and other violations. Two have graduated from the program so far.

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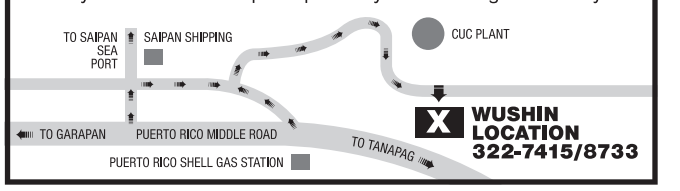

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Chamber supports call for stay on rejection of CW permits

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The biggest business organization in the CNMI has joined Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan in asking the Department of Homeland Security to set aside rejected CNMI-Only Transitional Worker permit applications for the upcoming fiscal year 2019.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Velma M. Palacios, in a letter dated March 7, asked DHS Secretary Kirstjen M. Nielsen to hold rather than return applications over the current limit of 4,999 set for FY 2019.

She said the Chamber supports Sen. Lisa Murkowski's (R-AK) S.2325 and Sablan's own H.R. 4869 (Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act) that both seek to extend the CW program for another 10 years and set a new limit of 13,000.

"…we respectfully request that applications over the current limit of 4,999 set for FY 2019 be held rather than returned, pending the outcome of the bill. Our economy depends on a stable and strong workforce. Wages are rising, and training continues to be provided to U.S. qualified workers. Our businesses need both foreign and local labor forces to survive," Palacios said.

Palacios

The Chamber president reiterated that the extension of the CW program is crucial to the island economy's survival and the first step is putting a stay on rejected applicants over the fiscal year 2019 cap.

"We are writing to you as the collective voice of the business community on Saipan. Our Chamber comprises more than 160 private businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. As our island is small and remote, our Chamber takes great measures to work with our whole community, as we are interdependent upon each other. Our workforce issues not only affect our business ventures, but our entire economy," she said.

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands has not sent a similar letter to Nielson but its chair, Gloria Cavanagh, said the stay on rejected permits is a reasonable request and her organization supports it.

"My understanding is that [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services] has made such a huge decrease because they are obligated by law to reduce the CW-1 number to zero by December 2019. They have no choice, as it is the current law. However, U.S. Congress is working on a bill dealing with this issue. If USCIS is making such a huge reduction because of the law, and a new law that addresses our economic issues when dealing with the CW-1 issue is in progress, USCIS will no longer be forced to reduce the cap to zero by December 2019 anymore. The 'ask' to hold off on any further reductions would therefore be a reasonable request," she said in an email to *Saipan Tribune*.

Last month, the CNMI's non-voting delegate to U.S. Congress made a similar appeal to Nielsen. Sablan said that implementing massive cuts to the foreign workforce of the CNMI would have immediate grave effects on the economy, especially since it is now "flush with growth after many years of decline."

Murkowski's S. 2325—as well as Sablan's parallel H.R. 4869—is a bill that proposes to extend the CNMI transitional period to fiscal year 2029, effectively extending essential programs such as the CW program and the E-2C investor program with it.

8 victims claim they paid 8.94M takas or $107,727

Eight Bangladeshi men claim that they paid a total of 8.94 million in Bangladeshi *takas* or about $107,727 in 2015 and 2016 for their employment in the CNMI.

Assistant U.S. attorney James Benedetto submitted Thursday before the U.S. District Court the affidavits of eight Bangladeshi men in support of the U.S. government's sentencing memorandum for businessman David Trung Quoc Phan and co-defendants Muksedur Rahman and Rafiqul Islam.

Phan and brothers Rahman and Islam were sentenced last Friday in federal court after being convicted of bringing Bangladeshi men to Saipan on promises of good-paying jobs and green cards in exchange for cash.

Four men stated in their affidavit that they each made a total payment of 1,200,000 *takas* to be employed in the CNMI.

The three said they made the cash payments, while the fourth said a family member gave the money.

A fifth said he made six cash payments for a total of 1,240,000 *takas*, while the sixth recalled his father making four payments in the total amount of 1,300,000 *takas*.

The seventh said he made five cash payments in the total of 1,100,000 *takas*.

An eighth man said he agreed to pay 1,200,000 *takas*, but only paid 500,000 *takas* in 2016, saying that when he got to Saipan, the other victims told him not to pay the remaining balance of 700,000 *takas*. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB18-OVR-068
SUBMISSION DATE: APRIL 12, 2018 • TIME: 10:30 A.M.
"PURCHASE OF TWO (2) POWER WHEELCHAIRS FOR THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION"
COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGUALR WORKING HOURS.
THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.
THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RGITH TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.
/S/ ARLENE KAY A. YAMAGATA, DIRECTOR OF OVR
/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN, DIRECTOR OF P&S

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS JUDICIARY
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB18-JUDICIARY-01
SUBMISSION DATE: March 15, 2018 TIME: 10:00 A.M.
"PURCHASE OF TRANSPORT VEHICLE (12-15 Passenger Van) FOR THE CNMI JUDICIARY, DRUG COURT DIVISION"
COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE CASHIER WINDOW, DOOR #5, LOCATED AT THE GUMA HUSTISIA / IIMWAL AWEEWE / HOUSE OF JUSTICE, SUSUPE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.
THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.
THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.
/S/ ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO, JUDICIARY EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY
/S/ JOHN T. VILLAGOMEZ, JUDICIARY PROCUREMENT OFFICER

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP18-CHCC/CGC-005
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 19, 2018 TIME: 9:00AM
"VEHICLE LEASE COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER- COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION"
COPIES OF THE RFP PACKET MAY BE PICKED –UP AT CHCC PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY DIVISION-MEDICAL SUPPLY STORAGE FACILITY LOWER BASE SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.
THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.
/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA, CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
/S/ PRISCILLA M. IAKOPO, CHCC DIRECTOR OF P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
INVITATION TO BID (ITB)
ITB18-CHCC/MSO-002
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 19, 2018 TIME: 9:00AM
COMMERCIAL BOX TRUCK/MSO COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
COPIES OF THE ITB PACKET MAY BE PICKED – UP AT CHCC PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY DIVISION-MEDICAL SUPPLY STORAGE FACILITY LOWER BASE SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.
THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY BIDS, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL BIDS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.
/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA, CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
/S/ PRISCILLA M. IAKOPO, CHCC DIRECTOR OF P&S

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Division of Fish & Wildlife
Department of Lands and Natural Resources
Lower Base, P.O. Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Cable Address: Gov. NMI Saipan • Telephone: 670-664-6000 • Fax: 670-664-6060
SMILING COVE MARINA QUARTERLY MEETING
This is to inform the public and all Smiling Cove Marina Dock users, that there will be a Quarterly meeting at the American Memorial Park Amphitheater on Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 6:00 pm.
The purpose of this meeting is to allow for questions and answers related to the use of the Marina facilities.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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INVITATION FOR BID
(This ad is paid for by NMHC with HUD funds.)
BID SUBMISSION DATE: Tuesday, March 20, 2018
TIME: 10:00 AM
NMHC IFB 2018-002
"Ground Maintenance Services for NMHC's Properties in Tinian"
Proposal packets will be available on February 20, 2018, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan or the Tinian Field Office in San Jose, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays.
The provisions of the CNMI Procurement regulations, NMIAC 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.
A **Mandatory Pre-Bid** conference will be held at **10:00 a.m.** on March 2, 2018, at the NMHC Tinian Field Office, San Jose, Tinian.
For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Acting Office Manager, at (670)234-6866/7689 during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.
/s/ Aubry Hocog, Chairwoman, NMHC Board of Directors
/s/ Herman S. Sablan, Director, Division of Procurement & Supply

Jacob & Nicole Winegardner
P.O. Box 10002 PMB S07
Saipan, MP 96950
483-8789/588-0700

Pro se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In The Matter Of The Adoption Of:	)	FCD-AD-CIVIL ACTION NO. 18-0081
J.C.B. Minor Child	)	**NOTICE OF HEARING**
By: Jacob Caryl Winegardner, Nicole Hamet Winegardner, Petitioner(s)	)	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on 26th day of March, 2018 at 1:30 PM in Courtroom 217, before the Honorable Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 23rd day of February, 2018.

/s/
By: Patrick V. Diaz,
Deputy Clerk of Court

Robert Tenorio Torres
Attorney at Law
Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya)
P.O. Box 503758
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 234-7859 • Fax. (670) 234-5749

Attorney for Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

MARIANAS PUBLIC LAND TRUST, Plaintiff,	)	Civil Action No. 16-0222
vs. GEORGE R. RABAULIMAN, Defendant.	)	**AMENDED SUMMONS**

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT, GEORGE R. RABAULIMAN:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED AND NOTIFIED to file any answer you wish to make to the COMPLAINT FOR FORECLOSURE, a copy of which is given to you herewith, within Twenty (20) Days after service of this Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to Robert Tenorio Torres, Attorney at Law, Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya), P.O. Box 503758, Saipan, MP 96950 , or as soon as practicable after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Court of the above-entitled Court for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Office of the Clerk of Court, CNMI SUPERIOR COURT, 1st Floor, Guma' Hustisia, Iimwal Aweewe, House of Justice, Susupe Village, P.O. Box 500307, Saipan MP 96950-0307. It may be prepared and signed for you by your Attorney and sent to the Clerk of Court by messenger or by mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to file an answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default pursuant to the court rules of the above-entitled Court may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint for Foreclosure.

Dated on this 21st day of November, 2017

/S/ Cherk of Court/Deputy Clerk

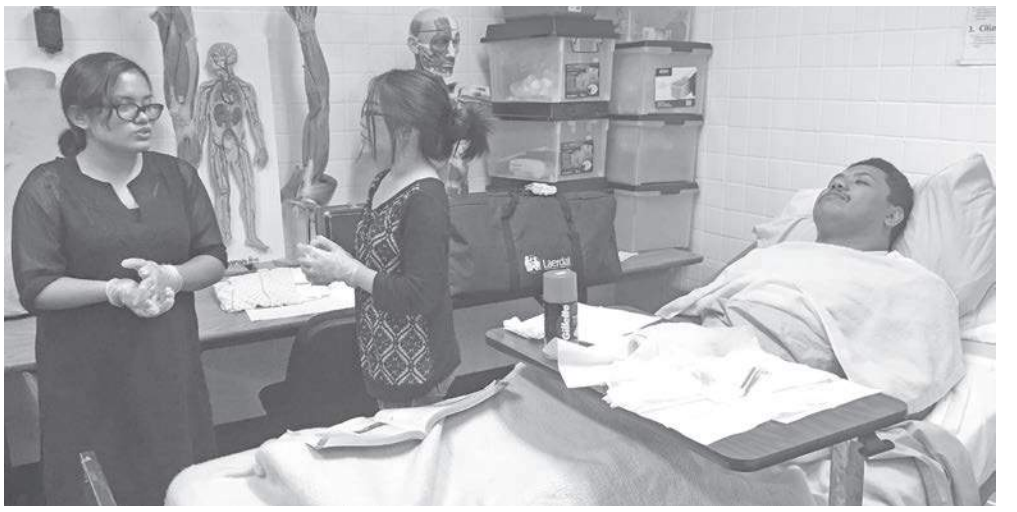
NMC offers nursing assistant certificate program

The Northern Marianas College Nursing Program, in collaboration with the CNMI Area Health Education Center, is offering a Nursing Assistance Certificate Program that will run for six weeks or a total of 150 credit hours.

This course will prepare entry-level nursing assistants to provide basic nursing care to the elderly, ill, and persons with disabilities in long-term care, hospitals, clinics, schools, and home health settings.

It is designed for any student or individual interested in beginning a career as a nursing assistant, individuals interested in taking a nursing course but still at developmental English and math levels, and for persons already employed as a nursing assistant but have not completed formal course work.

The course, approved by the Northern Mariana Islands Board of Nursing, will also prepare participants to take the National Nurse Aide Assessment Program Competency Examination.



Nursing students conduct simulation exercises at the Northern Marianas College's nursing department. For more information about how to apply for the nursing assistant certification program, contact the NMC Nursing Department by phone at 237-6743 or email andrew.mendiola@marianas.edu. NMC

After successfully completing the course, certified participants will be eligible to take the NNAAP Competency Examination under NMI Board of Nursing, Northern Mariana Islands, be licensed as a certified nursing assistant, be placed on the NMI Board of Nursing registry for nursing assistants, and may practice as a CNA in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. territories or U.S. mainland.

The training will run from June 11, 2018, through July 21, 2018.

Registrants must have high school diploma or equivalant; must have a minimum English placement level of EN093 and EN084; and must have a minimum math placement level, MA 091.

Students must also meet NMC admission requirements, which includes a completed NMC admission application form and a health evaluation form. Students must also pay a (non-refundable) application fee: $25 for residents or $50 for nonresidents; submit an official high school or high school equivalent transcript, and a copy of a valid, government-issued, photo ID.

The cost for the nursing assistant certificate program will include payment for six non-degree credits for a total of 150 hours; applicable college fees; a physical examination fee; BLS/CPR class fee; required clinical supplies and uniform; two NMC Nursing Program logo patches; and a CHCC hospital student name badge.

For more information, contact the NMC Nursing Department by phone at (670) 237-6743 or 6744 and ask for Andrew Mendiola, administrative assistant III or Rosa M. Tudela, RN, Nursing department chair. They may also be reached by email at: andrew.mendiola@marianas.edu or rosa.tudela@marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

2 Saipan nominees for Bizwoman of the Year award

Two of the seven nominees for this year's 2018 Businesswoman of the Year award are Saipan businesswomen: Gloria C. Cavanagh and Donna S. Krum.

Cavanagh is the general manager of Pacific Islands Club Saipan and chairs the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands. Krum is president of Friends First Marketing Inc. and co-owner of Paradise Dental Center.

The other nominees are Anna Gera-Van Seters, area manager, Fleet Card and Commercial Fuels, South Pacific Petroleum Corp.; Chito de Guzman-Aguilo, food and beverage director, Guam Reef & Olive Spa Resort; Grace Jacot, president and CEO, SET Pacific Inc.; Traci "TC" Jordan, founder and CEO, Xokiahi Cares Inc.; and Kathleen M. Thomas-Benavente; owner, event planner and stylist, The Occasion.

The award, presented by First Hawaiian Bank and Guam Business magazine, will be presented to one winner at the Businesswoman of the Year gala on April 28 at the Hyatt Regency Guam in conjunction with the release of the Guam Business magazine May-June issue, which will feature a commissioned photo of the recipient on its cover.

In its 13th year, the award program recognizes businesswomen in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands who have made significant contributions to their industries and have demonstrated a strong commitment to their community.

Through proceeds from the gala, the program also funds scholarships for students pursuing business and related degrees at the University of Guam, Guam Community College and Northern Marianas College.

Tickets for the gala may be purchased by contacting Melinda Sanchez at mindisan@gmail.com or (671) 929-5343.

Previous Businesswoman of the Year award recipients include Ramona L. Jones, CEO, Jones & Guerrero Co. Inc. (2017); Shirley Ann T. Sablan, executive vice president and general manager, Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. (2014). ***(PR)***

UOG announces presidential search

The Board of Regents of the University of Guam seeks nominations and applications for the position of president. After 10 highly successful years at the helm, Robert Underwood has announced his retirement, effective June 30, 2018.

UOG seeks an accomplished, innovative leader who will build on the university's "Good to Great" initiative, implementing a progressive and evolving strategy for excellence and growth.

A position profile for UOG president and a job announcement are available for download at:

https://www.agbsearch.com/searches/president-university-of-guam

The University of Guam Presidential Search Committee will begin reviewing and evaluating applications as they are received and will continue to accept and review credentials until the position is filled. To ensure fullest consideration, candidates are advised to submit their materials by April 27, 2018.

Dr. Richard A. Wueste, of AGB Search, is assisting with the search process. Nominators and prospective candidates may contact Wueste at richard.wueste@agbsearch.com or at 540-431-5131.

The BOR appointed the UOG PSC to coordinate the search for the new university president. The UOG PSC consists of eight members and is chaired by William Leon Guerrero, who served as a past chairperson for the BOR. Other members of the committee include: Elizabeth Gayle, chairperson, BOR; Elvin Chiang, treasurer, BOR; Antoinette Sanford, immediate past chairperson, BOR; Christopher Felix, member, BOR; Dr. Kate Moots, president, UOG Faculty Senate; Annie Fay Camacho, president, UOG Student Government Association; and Sophia Chu, general manager, Hyatt Regency Guam.

AGB Search was founded by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges in 2010 and is the only firm that specializes in all aspects of executive search exclusively for higher education institutions. ***(PR)***

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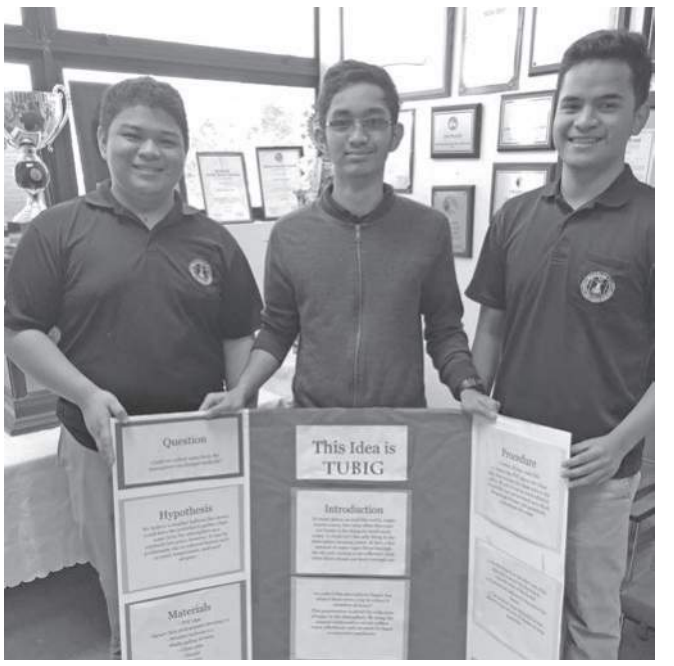
MCS reinvents traditional science fair with new categories

Winners of Mount Carmel School's recent Science Technology Engineer Math and Invention Fair gather for a group photo with school officials. MCS

Brent Ortizo, right, explains his "Black Sheep" project to judges Richard Salas, left, and Matthew Kintol, center. Ortizo's took first place in the 6-8 division of Mount Carmel School's recent Science Technology Engineer Math and Invention Fair. MCS



From left to right, Jan Bobadilla, Gary Camacho, and Matt Moran display their "This Idea is Tubig" invention idea, which took first place in the Invention category of Mount Carmel School's recent Science Technology Engineer Math and Invention Fair. MCS

At its recent Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Fair, Mount Carmel School introduced two new categories, Mathematics and Invention, giving the fair a new name: the annual STEMi fair.

While the school's annual science fair is often a big hit, generating hundreds of new ideas and projects, the school's science and math department wanted to improve the fair in two ways. First, the department wanted to be true to the "M" in the acronym "STEM" by having a mathematics category. The new category allows high school students to engage in analytical projects that apply math toward understanding a wide range of issues. In an era of big data, the new Mathematics category is preparing students to be better compilers and consumers of quantitative data.

Second, the school's science and math department wanted to tap into students' creativity by launching a new Invention category. While traditional science fair projects require students to actually conduct experiments, the new Invention category invited students to develop concepts and ideas for inventions that did not necessarily have to be created for the fair. In particular, it challenged students to develop abstract solutions to real-world problems.

School principal Frances Taimanao was very happy with the addition of the new categories. "These new categories are good ways to get students more excited about science and math," Taimanao said. "I look forward to even more projects and inventions next year."

Gary Camacho, whose group project, "This Idea is *Tubig*," took first place in the Invention category, was especially excited about the Invention category. "I think that the whole Invention category is one of the best things the school came up with," Camacho said. "A lot of these kids are smart, but they don't have the opportunity to show what they can do."

Camacho's group project proposed an affordable, easy, and environmentally safe way to make water for places that lack access to potable water. When asked about where he and his team came up with the idea for their project, Camacho said, "We thought about what would help people the most, and we realized that people without water would need an affordable way to access clean water."

This year's STEMi winners are as follows:

K-2ND GRADE DIVISION:

1st, Kennani Villagomez "Gummy Bear,"

2nd, Jadine Pangelinan "Rust Chemistry"

3rd, Isabella Demapan "Pendulum Art"

3RD-5TH GRADE DIVISION:

1st, Tomamitsu Aldan "Brine to Beverage", Maui Silva "Test Your Honey", and Leah Lansangan and Naomi Matsumoto "Penny Drops"

6TH-8TH DIVISION:

1st, Brent Ortizo "Black Sheep"

2nd, Yuri Sasamoto "Paper from Plants"

3rd, Brissa Hunter "Burning Calories"

9th-12th grade division:

1st, Tommy Cayetano "Video Games & Blood Pressure"

2nd, Brandee Hunter and Mikee Mendoza "Is Your Bottled Water Really Alkaline?"

3rd, Kalea Borja "Installation of Water Tank"

MATHEMATICS CATEGORY

1st, Aldwin Batusin, Ivy Leong, Joanie Paraiso, and Reica Ramirez "CaisNO or Yes"

2nd, Amy Cabanting and Mild Sripraset "Working Hard or Hardly Working?"

3rd, Louisa Han, Hoo Lim Cho, and Seoyone Lee "Population Registered"

INVENTION CATEGORY

1st, Gary Camacho, Jan Bobadilla, and Matt Moran "This Idea is *Tubig*"

2nd, Alvin Palacios "Smart Road"

3rd, William Blake Deleon Guerrero and Steven Li "Reflex Suit"

Of the students that placed, the following qualified to compete in the CNMI-wide STEM Fair: Kenanni Villagomez, Tomamitsu Aldan, Brent Ortizo, Tommy Cayetano, and Aldwin Batusin.

Mount Carmel School also expressed its appreciation to the following professionals for taking time out of their busy schedules to judge the school's STEMi Fair: Jaclyn Michelle Atalig from Department of Public Lands, Charito Bautista from the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, Samantha Birmingham-Babauta from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., Larry Delon Guerrero from Hofschneider Engineering, Carly Eakin from the Division of Land & Natural Resources, Matthew Kintol from BECQ, Keena Leon Guerrero from DLNR, Marybeth Manibusan from CHCC, Billie O'Campo from CHCC, Richard Salas from BECQ, Hannah Shai from CHCC, and Keanna Villagomez from CHCC. ***(PR)***

Saipan Community Church turns 70 on Easter Sunday

The CNMI's oldest Christian church is celebrating its 70th year in April 1 and Saipan Community Church senior pastor Josh Slater said a special guest will be on island to mark the milestone.

David Stephens, the son of Rev. Ed Stephens who founded the church in 1947, will attend the church's Easter Sunday celebration. Slater said the younger Stephens hasn't been on island since he was 4 years old.

The Easter Sunday celebration starts at 6am with a sunrise service, followed by breakfast, and at 10am the church will celebrate its 70th year with Stephens, who is expected to also preach to the congregation.

Saipan Community Church is located in Susupe across the Mobil gas station and beside the Susupe Beach Park. ***(PR)***

ARC marks 40th year in the CNMI

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A total of 76,000 families from all over the nation received assistance from the American Red Cross last year.

Last year, the Red Cross responded to back-to-back hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and to almost 50,000 home fires and provided casework assistance to help 76,000 families recover.

These feats were recognized Thursday, with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres declaring at the Office of the Governor conference room March as American Red Cross Month.

Red Cross NMI Chapter executive director John Hirsh said that 2018 is a special year for the group since it marks the 40th anniversary of the NMI Chapter.

"It's our 135th year nationally," Hirsh said, adding that the NMI Chapter has been on island since 1978.

According to Hirsh, Red Cross is active in all kinds of outreach in schools and the community on being prepared for the next storm. "It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when," he said, adding that the geographical location of the CNMI makes it prone to typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

"…We have had earthquakes in the region almost on a daily basis," he said. "We need to get people to understand that there is always a potential for a big earthquake here."

Interior sets $460.9K for Prior Service Trust Fund

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of the Interior has released a payment of $460,900 in fiscal year 2018 funding for the Prior Service Trust Fund administration, which distributes benefits to former employees of the post-World War II, U.S.-administered, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in the Western Pacific

"The United States continues to meet its commitment to 894 former employees for their prior service under U.S. administration in the larger Micronesia region," said Assistant Secretary Insular and International Affairs Doug Domenech. "People in the Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau rely on these payments for themselves and their families to meet everyday, practical needs."

Employee benefits provided through the Prior Service Trust Fund represent a responsibility assumed by the federal government following the dissolution of the TTPI in 1986.

The program serves beneficiaries with five years or more of prior service.

The four jurisdictions to emerge from the TTPI were the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. Leadership of these four jurisdictions continues to advocate strongly for the PSTF program.

Beneficiaries receive monthly checks in varying amounts from $27 to $64 and have reported using them for medicine, food, utility payments, and telephone service to keep in touch with family. This grant payment represents approximately half of the fiscal year 2018 budget needs; the remaining balance is pending final action from Congress on the fiscal year 2018 budget and is supported through the Technical Assistance Program of the Office of Insular Affairs in the Department of the Interior. ***(PR)***

Tinian gets a new water tank

Tinian and CNMI leaders pose in front of the new Tinian water tank. From left, Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, councilor Antonio SN Borja, Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary Camacho, Sen. Francisco Q. Cruz, Rep. Edwin P. Aldan, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, project manager James K. Ripple, Tinian Mayor Joey P. San Nicolas, councilor Edwin M. Hofschneider, Tinian Public Lands director Reynaldo M. Cing, and Sen. Francisco M. Borja

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tinian and CNMI leaders participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Tinian road marking project led by the CNMI Department of Public Works. From left, DPW Secretary James Ada, Rep. Angel Demapan, Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog, Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, Tinian Mayor Joey P. San Nicolas, Rep. Alice Igitol, councilor Edwin M. Hofschneider, Rep. Edwin P. Aldan, and Sen. Francisco M. Borja.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Tinian community celebrated the ribbon cutting for their new 0.5-million-gallon water tank in Carolinas Heights last Feb. 28.

The new tank, along with its predecessor, now serves about 70 percent of the island's residents and businesses.

Of the $1.6 million needed to complete the project, $700,000 was directed to the water tank pursuant to Tinian Legislative Delegation Resolution 19-4.

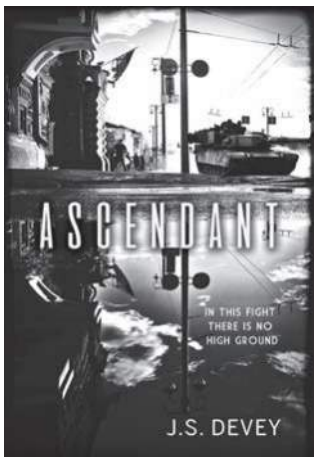
"In the face of our casino investments and the divert airfield, the Tinian Legislative Delegation recognizes the importance of ensuring that Tinian is equipped with the proper infrastructure," said Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider. "The completion of the [water tank] is key to ensuring that all of Tinian has reliable and consistent access to clean water, even as our community grows."

But the work does not stop there. "For our efforts to come full circle we must push for more improvement to our water distribution systems. The distribution lines from the water tanks are in need of replacement. The West San Jose Homestead is also in need of their own water distribution lines," Hofschneider added. "The [Tinian] delegation looks forward to working with the Capital Improvement Program] Office, [Commonwealth Utilities Corp.] and other major stakeholders to fund these projects and see their completion."

The 20th Tinian Legislative Delegation is upping the ante in preparing the Tinian community for forthcoming developments.

In addition to the recently completed renovation work at the Tinian International Airport, the Tinian delegation is actively pushing for much-needed improvements across Tinian, including additional highway repairs under the upcoming Federal Highway State Plan; the renovation and expansion of the Tinian Health Center, which is to be funded by Tinian's Commonwealth Development Authority bond interest funds pursuant to Tinian Local Law 20-33; and the paving of Marpo Heights II roads, which received $722,331 from Public Law 20-42. ***(PR)***

Saipan author releases new book



Saipan author Jeremy S. Devey has released his debut science fiction novel, *Ascendant*. *Ascendant* tells the story of Kristen Combs, an oceanographer who just wants to keep her head down and do her part to protect the seas. But in the mid-21st century, that's no simple task. America is in decline, Asia is rattling her sabers, and whispers of war are in the air. When an invasion does come, though, it's not the DPRK storming America's shores. Creatures made of water flood the streets of Seattle, decimating the city, killing thousands. Combs braves the flooded ruin of her city and makes a critical discovery about the Aquatic invaders. Her insight draws the attention of the U.S. military, and she is propelled to the forefront of humanity's response to the alien threat. Assisted by a half-machine mako warrior and her team of Marines, Combs must find answers: Why are the Aquatics here? What do they want? And can they be stopped before civilization is washed off the face of the Earth?

Ascendant is available for purchase in print and ebook formats by searching for "JS Devey" on the Amazon website. ***(PR)***

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
MVA-RFP-18-2011

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

Submission /Closing Date: March 29, 2018 Time: 3:00 p.m.

For: Local Public Relation and Media Services

Submit sealed proposals to: Marianas Visitors Authority, Procurement Office
San Jose Professional Building, Beach Rd., San Jose
P.O. Box 500861, Saipan, MP 96950

Interested parties may pick up the Scope of Work on or after **February 26, 2018**, at the **Marianas Visitors Authority Office, San Jose Professional Building, Beach Road, San Jose, Saipan**, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Proposals submitted from individuals outside the Commonwealth must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or certified courier services by **March 29, 2018**, and must be received within seven (7) working days of that date. Proposers from outside the Commonwealth must notify the MVA/ Mr. David B. Muna in writing of their intent to submit a proposal in order to receive the additional seven (7) days for the receipt of the actual Proposal Documents. Participants outside the **Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands** must submit a **Notice of Intent** by any mode of written communication including facsimile at+1-670-664-3237 or email to dmuna@mymarianas.com, and must be received by 5 p.m. Chamorro Standard Time on **March 29, 2018**.

All questions regarding this RFP must be sent to Mr. David B. Muna at dmuna@mymarianas.com or faxed to +1-670-664-3237, **no later than 5 p.m. Chamorro Standard Time on March 15, 2018.**

/s/ Gloria C. Cavanagh
Chairperson, Board of Directors

/s/ Christopher A. Concepcion
Managing Director

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PAROLE

P.O. BOX 502641, Saipan, MP 96950-2641
Tel: Nos.: (670) 664-3300 – 3302 • FAX: (670) 664-3310 • E-mail: govbop@pticom.com

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The Honorable Ralph Dig. Torres, Governor and the Honorable Victor B. Hocog, Lt Governor, through the Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992", hereby give Official Notice that a **Preliminary Hearing** is scheduled for **March 16, 2018 (Friday), beginning at 10:00 a.m.,** at the CNMI Board of Parole Office Building 1216, located at Capitol Hill, Saipan MP 96950. The following individual (s) will appear before the Hearing Examiner.

I. Parolee

1. EUGENE B. REPEKI Cr. Cs. No.: 00-0162B B.O.P. No.: 00-010

If you have any question or need additional information, please contact the Board of Parole Office at telephone numbers 664-3300 or 664-3302.

/s/ Ramon B. Camacho
BOP Chairman

March 8, 2018

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-18-015

LEASE OF OFFICE/WAREHOUSE SPACE FOR CUC POWER DIVISION TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION SECTION, SAIPAN CNMI

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from firms for the lease of office & warehouse spaces for CUC Power Division, Transmission & Distribution Section in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space may be situated within or adjacent to the warehouse. The office & warehouse must have a loading dock and parking stalls that can accommodate over-sized heavy equipment (e. g. bucket trucks, augers and backhoes). Additionally, the proposed office space must conform to American Disabilities Act (ADA), OSHA and CNMI Zoning requirements.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $50.00 (non-refundable) for one RFP package set. Prospective Proposers must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division.

One (1) original and four (4) hard copies, along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-RFP-18-015, Lease of Office/Warehouse Space for CUC Power Division Transmission and Distribution Section, Saipan, CNMI"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **April 16, 2018 at 10:00 AM (ChST).** Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.

All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, which will become the obligation of the proponent awarded a contract. Successful proponents will be required to submit a copy of a valid CNMI Business license in compliance with the Licensing Laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, upon award of the contract. Proponents shall comply to all applicable CNMI and Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 28, 2018** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC, Purchasing Officer via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Lee Lieto, CUC, Acting Power Division Manager via email address lee.lieto@cucgov.org, Adrian Reyes, CUC, Power Division Engineer via email address adrian.reyes@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan, CUC, Purchasing Technician, Senior via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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EDITORIAL

Trump, Little Rocket Man and a chance at history

If you had to pick a word that best describes the Trump presidency so far, it might be "surreal." And few developments affirm that more than news that President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un plan to meet for talks this spring. Supposedly they'll discuss prospects for a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. Yes, "Little Rocket Man" and an American president whom Kim once referred to as a "dotard" in the same room, with a potential to make history.

Fast forward a few years: Trump and Kim meet again, this time in Stockholm to jointly accept their Nobel Peace Prize? Surreal indeed. Fantasy? For now, yes, of course.

Nevertheless, two leaders widely seen as volatile, self-absorbed and belligerent have agreed to do something no other sitting American president and North Korean leader ever have done—sit face-to-face and talk seriously about nukes. As a carrot, Kim has dangled a commitment to halt nuclear and missile testing ahead of the talks, which are slated for the end of May.

Why now? It may be that Kim feels the vise of amped-up economic sanctions and sees in Trump an American leader who, unlike his predecessors, has been exceedingly blunt with threats to "totally destroy" North Korea. Equally likely, however, is Kim's calculation that Trump would agree to a meeting because, well, he's Trump: a president supremely confident in his negotiating skills, a leader with the hubris to think he can get done what other presidents couldn't, and to do it the Trump way—on his own. Stand down, stuffy diplomats.

Kim also comes to the table with a hand that his father and grandfather didn't have: missiles capped with nuclear warheads. His predecessors also sought newfound legitimacy through a meeting with an American president, but they didn't have the arsenal that Kim now has. Like his father and grandfather, Kim yearns to be perceived as a leader on equal footing with the American commander-in-chief. What better way to get there than a sit-down with Trump?

Trump no doubt will go into the meeting with visions of himself at the podium in Stockholm. Cue the skepticism, not only of that scene but of the here and now. While the meeting would be unprecedented, any flirtatious Pyongyang offer to denuclearize isn't. In 2005, North Korea pledged to abandon its nuclear weapons program during the "six-party talks." Three years later, Pyongyang restarted its program.

The hasty timetable could also prove counterproductive. The administration has just two months to prepare. The State Department's chief North Korea negotiator, Joseph Yun, is on his way out, and the administration has balked at nominating another experienced negotiator, Victor Cha, the ambassador to South Korea, The New York Times reported.

None of that may matter to Trump, with his penchant for winging it. But his assent to a meeting is indeed a gamble, and the stakes couldn't be much higher. Trump has already made it clear that the only acceptable outcome is denuclear-

See TRUMP on Next Page

Looking for female political leaders? The list is small

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. *Readers may write to her at:* Philadelphia Inquirer, *P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by email at trubin@phillynews.com.*

I wanted to list female political leaders to watch in 2018, in honor of International Women's Day, but the list is sadly disappointing.

Currently, there are only 20 women holding the office of head of state or head of government—which equals 6.3 percent of the 315 international leaders. And two of the heads of state – Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Denmark's Margrethe II—are hereditary queens.

No wonder the World Economic Forum's 2017 Gender Gap report predicts that it will take 99 years to, maybe, reach political parity between male and female leaders. (Will it take that long, I wonder, after the Hillary debacle for the United States to elect a woman president?)

Nor have women leaders fared particularly well in recent years. Several female prime ministers lost elections during the last decade. Brazil's Dilma Rousseff was impeached for budget malfeasance, South Korea's President Park Geun-Hye was impeached for corruption in 2016 and is awaiting trial, and Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra was defeated in 2015 and found guilty of abusing power by the country's constitutional court. Given the political history of those countries, it's not clear whether these leaders would have been treated better if they were male.

In one happy contrast, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the world's first elected black female president and Africa's first elected female head of state (in 2006), survived some dips to step down with dignity in 2018.

Of those female leaders now in power, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been state counsellor (equivalent to prime minister) since 2016, has been the biggest disappointment. A heroic fighter for democracy and human rights, she suffered 15 years of house arrest and won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. But she has refused to criticize Myanmar's military for its massive ethnic cleansing and brutalization of 500,000 members of the ethnic Muslim Rohingya minority, who have fled to Bangladesh.

So who, among the remaining 18 non-queenly female leaders, should you watch in 2018?

First and foremost is the indomitable Angela Merkel, German chancellor since 2005. In her final term, her power has dipped and her party's parliamentary bloc shrunk, but she just concluded a difficult coalition accord with the Social Democrats. This will provide some vital stability in a Europe shaken by a populist surge in Italy and Central Europe. Merkel is still an anchor for Europe, which the continent badly needs.

Which brings us to the second European leader to watch: Theresa May, the weakened prime minister of the United Kingdom. The U.K.'s drawn-out Brexit is further destabilizing Europe. This year will reveal whether May can negotiate a divorce from the European Union without crashing her island's economy and sparking new strife in Northern Ireland.

Then I would watch the two female Baltic presidents, Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia and the reelected Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania. It takes particular skill to manage Baltic affairs with Vladimir Putin's Russia breathing down their necks and seeking to manipulate their politics, but the Baltic leaders have been managing astonishingly well.

Speaking of Russia, I would watch Russian presidential candidate Ksenia Sobchak, a 36-year-old former TV star who has had the gall to challenge Putin in the March 18 presidential election. She will probably draw only a tiny percentage of the vote but has at least managed to insert some real issues into state-controlled TV coverage. (She is tolerated as a candidate, unlike the banned and far more potent opposition leader Alexei Navalny, because her dad was a friend of Putin's and her unthreatening presence gives Putin cover to claim the election is free.)

I would also recommend watching Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who is not recognized as a sovereign leader by China or the United Nations. She has had to govern with a strong and steady hand to balance Beijing's constant pressure and President Trump's Taiwan gaffes. (By the way, you won't find any senior female leaders in Beijing, where President Xi Jinping will be confirmed as virtual president for life this week.)

And finally, it's worth paying attention to the talented Michelle Bachelet, first Chilean president since 1932 to win twice in the presidential elections, as well as New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, who at 37 is the youngest prime minister in the world.

With such a tiny sample of women leaders, it's hard to tell whether their performance is truly affected by gender or whether it reflects their countries' cultures and histories in the same way it does for their male counterparts.

But we will never know until the sample is vastly expanded. And, if the Gender Gap report is correct, that won't happen in my lifetime or yours.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

A summit failure would hurt Trump more than Kim

By JAMES GIBNEY
BLOOMBERG VIEW

President Donald Trump has upended expectations and interrupted the drumbeat toward war on the Korean Peninsula with his agreement to meet Kim Jong Un at "a time and place to be determined." But what happens if talks with "Little Rocket Man" blow up on the launching pad?

The odds are high. Few analysts expect Kim to give up North Korea's nuclear deterrent, which he sees as vital to his regime's survival. (See: Moammar Gadhafi, 1942-2011.) Kim's existential stakes and Trump's mercurial brinkmanship could make a highly combustible combination. And by reversing the staging sequence of summitry—a series of lower-level meetings to produce a basket of deliverables that muckety-mucks can then bless—Trump threatens to turn what should be the diplomatic equivalent of the Brandenburg Concertos into an acid jazz improvisation.

Unfortunately, at least in the short term, the U.S. and Trump have much more to lose from failed talks than Kim does. North Korea's dictator doesn't have to explain to voters what went wrong. If anything, he can say that he stood firm against unreasonable demands, going toe-to-toe with a U.S. president in person as a diplomatic equal. That's something his father and grandfather never achieved. He still will have at his disposal every North Korean capability for disruption, misadventure, and military conflict.

Trump, meanwhile, will be faced with two unpalatable alternatives: As his erstwhile ambassadorial nominee Victor Cha has noted, Trump may conclude that diplomacy "has run out of road" and opt for a military solution. Or he may have to face the challenge of getting the world to sign on to even stricter sanctions.

In both cases, he would not be able to move ahead effectively without the support of South Korea, Japan and other U.S. allies. China and Russia, each with huge stakes in the future of the Korean Peninsula and vetoes in the United Nations Security Council, also need to be on board. For whatever discomfort they have with Kim's leadership, they both have reasons to favor dialogue over war or more bad-dog sanctions that will embroil Russian and Chinese companies.

Given Trump's temperament, his denuded diplomatic establishment and his perception of his political base, how likely is he to pursue the kind of consultations and give-and-take necessary to keep nervous allies and a revanchist Russia and rising China on board? With all due respect to Jim Mattis, Rex Tillerson and Nikki Haley: Good luck with that. Instead, what's more likely in the event of a summit failure is the U.S. facing the same dilemmas with which it started—only more isolated and with fewer tools at its disposal.

That prospect, which won't be far from the minds of the few remaining adults in the Situation Room, is likely to generate more pressure for a face-saving deal than one that stands the test of time. But, hey, given the choice between a catastrophic war or a glitzy deal that's as short-lived as Trump Steaks, Trump Mortgage, Trump Vodka, Trump Magazine, Trump University or other failed ventures, I know which one I'd choose.

James Gibney writes editorials on international affairs for Bloomberg View*. He was features editor at the* Atlantic*, deputy editor at the* New York Times *op-ed page and executive editor at* Foreign Policy *magazine. He was a foreign service officer and a speechwriter for Secretary of State Warren Christopher, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and President Bill Clinton.*

To Mueller's Team, Take Your Time

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY 'PEPE BATBON' CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey "Pepe Batbon" Connolly is a retired teacher and poet living on Tinian who taught English in CNMI public schools for the past 30 years. He has also taught in Alaska, New Orleans, and Las Vegas.

Inspiration from 'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time' by late English Renaissance poet Robert Herrick (1591-1674).

Use your earbuds while you may
Old Tweety is still trying
and this same power that tweets today
tomorrow will be dying
the present office holder is not done
but the lower the polls he is getting
the harder for him the next race to run
and more difficult will be his vetting
his lies will blind no one but he
seen through narcissistic myopia
we realize many more will come to be
part of Donald Drumpf's dystopia
do not tarry but make your progress sublime
Trumpty Dumpty will fall all in good time

IT'S ABOUT THE MONEY, STUPID

MONEY made the man
elected with no plans
his stay in Washington, D.C.
proved embarrassing for all to see
except for his myopic base fans
MONEY got the man in
with his father's help to begin
then billionaires from the alt right
supported him throughout the fight
Russian oligarch rubles sealed the win
MONEY now keeps him afloat
international loans and bank notes
he takes the moolah any way he can get it
hotels golf courses emoluments he doesn't sweat it
just more filthy lucre to buy more votes
MONEY talks better than stocks up or down, as the
the old song goes, 'Money Makes the World Go Round'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A chance at peace

So our President Donald Trump is to meet with North Korea's Kim Jong Un for the purpose of working out a plan to live in peaceful coexistence. I for one wish them success. Both leaders have the same confrontational, in-your-face approach and would be wise to bring their top diplomats to the table. Both stand on a level playing field since "small minds think alike!" As President Trump so frequently says, "We'll see what happens." I say, "Give them a chance."

Herb Stark
Mooresville, NC

It's getting worse

Guam's problems just keep getting worse. Guam has closed some but not all of its fire and police stations. Now they are talking about discontinuing the school buses, turning off the streetlights, and closing recreational facilities.

There has also been talk of a government-wide shutdown. I do not know of any municipality anywhere in the United States that has closed down its own government. Just be thankful we are all on Saipan.

Philip Dauterman, MD
va email

Thank you very much!

I'd like to give my sincere appreciation to everyone who made our wedding a very special one. I got married on Feb. 24, 2018, to my husband, Joshua Duenas. I can't express how stressful it was just to plan that big day. I started my wedding planning so clueless. I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without the help of everyone who assisted me and my family in coordinating this special event. I want to share my experiences with people and businesses who gave exceptional service. Oftentimes, all we hear are negative things on our island. I would like to share something positive that can happen on this special place called Saipan.

First off, I would like to thank Michelle Lin-Sablan of Pena House Boutique and her awesome staff. I could not picture my wedding theme and attire until Michelle helped me visualize with samples. She was very patient with me and assisted me in any way she could. The outfits for the wedding were just so beautiful and came out better than I expected, especially living on an island that do not have the conveniences, she made it possible.

I'd like to thank Island Touch by Philip. All I gave him was my theme color and budget and he created it all for me. He put together the beautiful theme décor, flowers, and wedding accessories for our wedding ceremony and reception. When I arrived at my ceremony and reception, I was pleasantly surprised because everything was absolutely gorgeous.

For my makeup, Eydie of Makeover Salon made me feel like a queen. He did just the right touch for hair and makeup, especially for such a busy day, my hair and makeup lasted me throughout the whole time without much touch up.

The last company I would like to thank is Hyatt Regency Saipan. I am the daughter of a Hyatt employee and I had the wonderful experience growing up with the hotel. It only made sense that I had my dream wedding there. Other hotels or venues were not an option and it did not mean I got any special treatment because of my ties to the hotel. I was welcomed and assisted like a regular client and I can definitely say the hotel did not disappoint me. Everyone who works at the hotel is so friendly. They go above and beyond to make guests and family members feel welcomed. The whole Hyatt family was involved in my wedding in one shape or another. The service was great and the personal details added at the reception were just amazing. They do not only listen to what you want, they actually make it happen. Hyatt has a great team and I want to thank them all for making my dinner party a great experience!

Brides-to-be have to understand that this "perfect" day might not go as you plan, but the only way to have a great wedding day is to be open-minded. I can only base it off of my personal experience and I hope it helps. One note to tell you, there will be a lot of opinions shared that day but just keep in mind that this is *your* special day, and just listen to your heart and what you want. There will be others who are more stressed out than you are and it will drive you crazy. After all is said and done (stress and all), everything will be okay. The one day you have been stressing about will end real quickly, so do not let anyone or anything ruin that! Enjoy yourself and people will enjoy it with you. Thank you again to our family, friends, and all the businesses that contributed in making our special day exactly that, special!

Megan Sablan Duenas
Kagman, Saipan

TRUMP

From Page 10

ization. Will Kim be willing to relinquish the very nuclear weapons that give him so much clout? If talks end and Trump doesn't get what he wants, Kim will walk away with strengthened legitimacy—and a nuclear weapons program with American cities as primary targets. Trump will walk away boasting of his reasonableness in meeting with Kim. That could give him flexibility for whatever comes in the future—such as a pre-emptive U.S. strike if North Korea becomes more menacing.

Trump crafted a campaign persona as the quintessential dealmaker. Up until now, his foreign policy track record says otherwise. Meeting with Kim gives him a chance to prove his critics wrong. We hope he can. The likely alternative is a return to the threat of nuclear war.

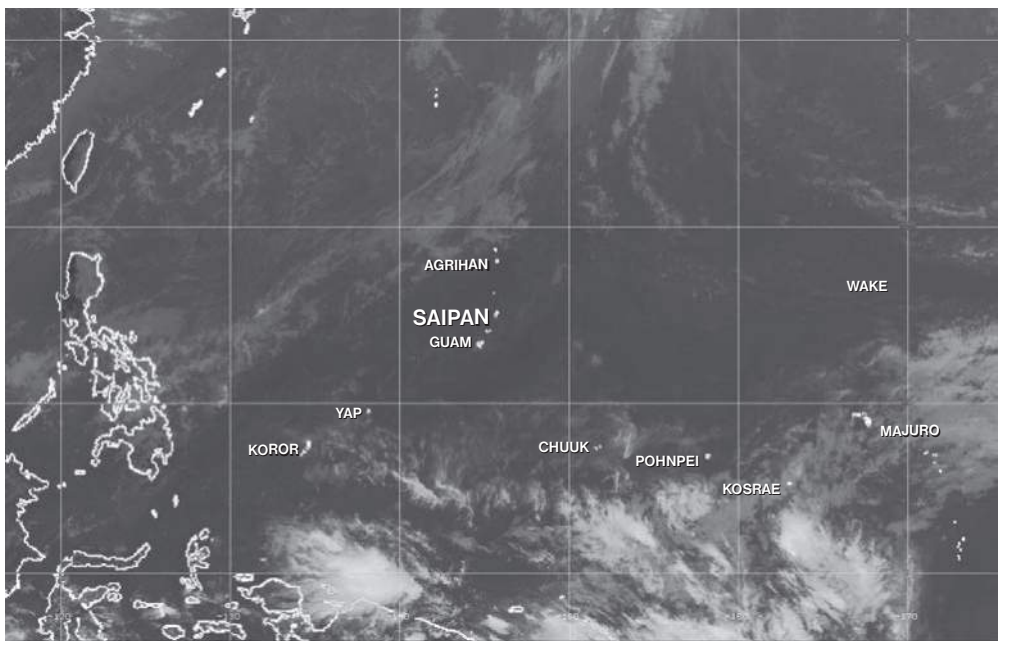
(c)2018 *Chicago Tribune*

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲89° ▼77°	▲89° ▼77°	▲89° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲89° ▼77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:35 AM, SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2018
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

No changes made to the forecast except to update winds with new model data. Expect the dry weather pattern to continue today. The GFS hints at mostly cloudy skies tonight and Monday. ECMWF and NAVGEM show a few showers but probably not too extensive. UKMET is very dry. With the model uncertainty kept forecast as is. There will probably be small patches of showers and clouds at various times during the week, but deep-layer moisture will be lacking and so showers will be isolated at best.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 76°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	86° / 77°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorm	83° / 77°
Kosrae	Thunderstorm	83° / 77°
Majuro	Thunderstorm	85° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Windy	72° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	70° / 43°
Hong Kong	Sunny	75° / 68°
Honolulu	Showers	76° / 69°
London	Showers	52° / 41°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	71° / 50°
Manila	Showers	90° / 75°
Melbourne	Sunny	91° / 63°
Miami	Showers	79° / 62°
New York	Showers	42° / 33°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	66° / 48°
Paris	Showers	52° / 43°
Busan	Sunny	52° / 36°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	61° / 48°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	60° / 37°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	61° / 49°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	61° / 46°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	66° / 46°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	46° / 30°

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:28 AM	LOW TIDE	1.57
10:42 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.18
3:26 PM	LOW TIDE	1.54
10:57 PM	HIGH TIDE	0.15

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:27 AM	6:26 PM
Tuesday	6:25 AM	6:26 PM
Wednesday	6:25 AM	6:26 PM
Thursday	6:25 AM	6:27 PM
Friday	6:24 AM	6:27 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	2:27 am	2:03 pm	-
Tuesday	3:13 am	2:53 pm	-
Wednesday	3:59 am	3:43 pm	-
Thursday	4:43 am	4:33 pm	-
Friday	5:25 am	5:24 pm	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 19, 2017

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:15pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:10am	6:10am	1, 7
7C3451	4:00am	7:05am	4, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

TW308	2:00am	6:05am	Daily
OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
LJ652	3:40am	7:30am	1, 4, 5, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	5:40am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-HANGZHOU (HGH)

JD396	7:30am	12:00pm	1
JD396	4:50pm	10:00pm	4

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	10:55am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	10:55am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	9:00am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	8:10am	7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:40pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6398/193	6:05pm	11:50pm	2, 5 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	1:50am	5:15am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UO43	5:45am	8:40am	1, 3, 5, 7
UA6398/159	6:05pm	11:00pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:05pm	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:00pm	2:10am+1	4
7C3452	9:05pm	2:10am+1	3, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
TW307	7:45pm	1:00am+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
LJ651	9:10pm	2:40am+1	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:20pm	4:30am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

HANGZHOU (HGH)-SAIPAN

JD395	8:25am	3:30pm	4
JD395	9:55pm	5:00am+1	7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:25pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA182/6395	12:40am	8:05am	3, 6 via GUM
UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:25pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:25pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	Daily via GUM
UA192/6395	10:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
UA184/6395	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:15pm	12:15am+1	3, 7
UO42	6:50pm	1:45am+1	7
UO42	9:30pm	4:25am+1	2, 4, 6
UA116/6395	11:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, LJ Jin Air, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, PR PAL Express; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The* Saipan Tribune *is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

High schools, middle schools learn conservation

Participants of the Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance's Schools for Environmental Conservation gather together before heading back to Saipan. MNA

The CNMI Snorkels event on Managaha Island led by Division of Coatal Resources Management's Jihan Younis and Mallory Muna. MINA

The Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance hosted a coral reef conservation workshop this past weekend for teachers and students from various high schools and middle schools on island as part of their "Schools for Environmental Conservation" program.

Participants attending the workshop included students and teachers from Saipan Southern High School, Kagman High School, Mount Carmel High School, Tanapag Middle School, Dandan Middle School, and Francisco M. Sablan Middle School.

Coral reefs have become a growing concern worldwide, and part of MINA's efforts in conservation in the region is to align this year's programs with the 3rd International Year of the Reef.

Students from Dandan Middle School discuss their conservation action plan for their school campus. MINA

The curriculum designed for this one-day educational workshop introduced awareness of the concept of "think global, act local." Presentations from environmental experts in the CNMI focused on the theme of "Learning About, Interacting With, and Actively Conserving Coral Reefs."

Jihan Younis of the Division of Coastal Resources Management; Dr. Lyza Johnston of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality; David Benavente of DCRM; Mallory Muña of DCRM, and Brooke Nevitt, former executive director and MINA volunteer, presented a wide array of information, with lectures and activities including the Micronesia Challenge, Coral Reefs 101, CNMI Marine Monitoring Program, Conservation Action Planning, and ways the community can get involved to help protect and conserve the islands' precious coral reefs.

One of the most important components of MINA's "Schools for Environmental Conservation" is the development of Conservation Action Plans. The students involved in the workshops are now in the process of developing these CAPs to help their schools ameliorate the threats to coral reefs and promote environmental stewardship among their peers. Students will present their CAPs this May.

In addition to the workshops, SFEC participants were treated to a field trip to Managaha Island to join a CNMI Snorkels event, a hands-on opportunity where they learned about the marine ecosystem while enjoying the island's pristine waters.

David Benavente of the Division of Coastal Resources Management provides information on the CNMI Marine Monitoring Team. MINA

All these activities are completely funded by MINA with support from the Coral Reef Initiative/Natural Resources Program in the Office of Insular Affairs.

MINA expresses their sincere appreciation to all teachers, students, presenters, volunteers, and MyCaptures Photography for making this year's SFEC a huge success.

To learn more about how MINA empowers communities for conservation, visit MINA's Facebook page, email MINA at minaoutreach@gmail.com, or call MINA at 233-7333(REEF). ***(PR)***

CNMI Snorkels on Managaha Island. MINA

Isaac Tenorio of Dandan Middle School learns about the Conservation Action Plans process. MINA

Clarissa Masga of Francisco M. Sablan Middle School explores ideas with her students. MINA

Brooke Nevitt outlines the steps in developing a successful conservation action plan. MINA

Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance program manager Becky Furey explains the next steps to participants. MINA

Business

Trump tariffs may imperil a delicate global economic rebound

WASHINGTON (AP)—Things had been going along so nicely.

Over the past year, the major regions of the world finally shed the scars of a global financial crisis and grew in unison for the first time in a decade. Worldwide growth is expected to hit 3.9 percent this year—the best pace since 2011—and the International Monetary Fund says most countries are sharing in the prosperity.

But President Donald Trump's announcement Thursday that the United States would impose heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminum—with some countries potentially exempted—suddenly raised a fear that few had anticipated: That U.S. tariffs could trigger a chain of tit-for-tat retaliation by America's trading partners that could erupt into a full-blown trade war and possibly threaten the global economy.

AP

European Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmstroem, center, Japanese Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Hiroshige Seko, right, and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, pose for photographers prior to a meeting at EU headquarters in Brussels on Saturday, March 10, 2018.

Given how far many countries have come since the painful years of debt crises and a crushing recession, the threat posed by the tariffs struck many as an ill-considered risk.

"Tariffs threaten to strangle the global golden goose," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "The global economy is on the same page for the first time in over a decade. This threatens to derail it."

It remains far from clear how, exactly, the Trump administration's tariffs will be applied, which countries will be subject to them or how economically damaging the retaliation from the affected nations might prove. The president announced 25 percent tariffs on foreign steel and 10 percent tariffs on foreign aluminum. But he gave Canada and Mexico a reprieve: He exempted them from the tax temporarily—provided that they agree to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement to Trump's liking.

The president has also invited other countries to try to negotiate their way out of the tariffs, though his administration has yet to explain how the appeals process will work. The lack of details about when or how individual countries could apply for waivers has only compounded the uncertainty surrounding the economic impact of the tariffs.

On Saturday, Trump tweeted anew his position that the U.S. has been abused economically by the EU: "The European Union, wonderful countries who treat the U.S. very badly on trade, are complaining about the tariffs on Steel & Aluminum. If they drop their horrific barriers & tariffs on U.S. products going in, we will likewise drop ours. Big Deficit. If not, we Tax Cars etc. FAIR!"

European nations, though, are already threatening to retaliate with tariffs of their own against such iconic American products as motorcycles, blue jeans and bourbon, among others.

Across the world, China, the world's second-largest economy after the United States, is also sending ominous signals. Beijing said it was ready to counterpunch if the U.S. tariffs hurt Chinese companies, though in a statement Friday it made no specific retaliation threat.

China's Commerce Ministry criticized Trump for acting unilaterally rather than working through the World Trade Organization. In a statement, Wang Hejun, a ministry official, warned that the tariffs "will surely have a serious impact on the normal international order."

Any trade war would upset an international economic order that has achieved stability and relative health. From Brussels to Beijing to Buenos Aires, pockets of the world had long suffered from the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis but have been recovering steadily. Europe and Japan, both laggards for years, are at last showing steady growth.

Developing countries, too, have mostly recovered from a 2014-2015 crash in commodities prices. And the United States is enjoying a job market boom, fueled in part by the stronger global economy, rising business and consumer confidence and the sweeping tax cuts that Trump pushed through Congress.

China minister says trade war with US would be 'disaster'

BEIJING (AP)—China said Sunday that it will not initiate a trade war with the United States, but vowed to defend its national interests in the face of growing American protectionism.

"There are no winners in a trade war, and it would bring disaster to our two countries as well as the rest of the world," Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan said at a briefing on the sidelines of China's annual parliamentary session.

"China does not wish to fight a trade war, nor will China initiate a trade war, but we can handle any challenge and will resolutely defend the interests of our country and our people," he said.

It was Beijing's latest statement on "problems in Sino-U.S. economic trade and cooperation," alluding to President Donald Trump's plan to impose heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminum. The U.S. leader said Thursday that he was slapping tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum, temporarily exempting big steel producers Canada and Mexico.

Chinese leaders have threatened in the past to retaliate against raised trade barriers, but have yet to take direct action following Trump's announcement.

Citing Chinese researchers, Zhong said the U.S. has been overstating its trade deficit with China by about 20 percent every year. He gave no details on how this figure was reached, but the U.S. and Chinese governments generally report widely differing trade figures because Beijing counts only the first port to which goods go instead of their final destination.

The U.S. reported a $375 billion deficit with China last year, so a 20 percent reduction would still be among the largest trade gaps that the U.S. has with any country.

Zhong blamed the trade imbalance in part on controls over U.S. high-tech exports to China, repeating a Chinese claim that Washington could narrow its trade deficit if it allowed China to buy more "dual use" technology such as supercomputers and advanced materials with military applications.

U.S. officials have said such sales would make up only a few percent of the deficit while possibly threatening American national security.

The Trump administration earlier approved higher tariffs on Chinese-made washing machines, solar modules and some other goods, prompting Beijing to accuse Washington of disrupting global trade regulation by taking action under U.S. law instead of through the World Trade Organization.

Liu He, Chinese President Xi Jinping's top economic adviser, visited Washington earlier this month in an attempt to smooth strained ties.

Zhong said China would continue to "relax market access" to China and said China would also attach greater importance to intellectual property right, another point of tension with the U.S.

China absorbed $136.3 billion in foreign investment last year. The country has long been among the top global destinations for investment, but foreign enthusiasm is cooling. Surveys by business groups show companies are shifting emphasis to other Asian economies seen as more profitable or less restrictive.

"We have noticed that some foreign-funded businesses have complained about China's investment environment," Zhong said. "The fact that they have complaints indicates that they are still paying attention to China's development and have confidence in China's market."

'Pharma Bro' gets 7 years in prison in securities fraud case

NEW YORK (AP)—The smirk wiped off his face, a crying Martin Shkreli was sentenced to seven years in prison for securities fraud Friday in a hard fall for the pharmaceutical-industry bad boy vilified for jacking up the price of a lifesaving drug.

Shkreli, the boyish-looking, 34-year-old entrepreneur dubbed the "Pharma Bro" for his loutish behavior, was handed his punishment after a hearing in which he and his attorney struggled with limited success to make him a sympathetic figure. His own lawyer confessed to wanting to punch him in the face sometimes.

The defendant hung his head and choked up as he admitted to many mistakes and apologized to the investors he was convicted of defrauding. At one point, a clerk handed him a box of tissues.

"I'm not the same person I was," Shkreli said. "I know right from wrong. I know what it means to tell the truth and what it means to lie."

He also said: "The only person to blame for me being here today is me. There is no conspiracy to take down Martin Shkreli. I took down Martin Shkreli."

In the end, U.S. District Judge Kiyo Matsumoto gave him a sentence that fell well short of the 15 years prosecutors wanted but was a lot longer than the 18 months his lawyer asked for. He was also fined $75,000.

Shkreli was found guilty in August of lying to investors in two failed hedge funds and cheating them out of millions. The case was unrelated to the 2015 furor in which he was accused of price-gouging, but his arrest was seen as rough justice by the many enemies he made with his smug and abrasive behavior online and off.

The judge insisted that the punishment was not about Shkreli's online antics or his raising the cost of the drug. "This case is not about Mr. Shkreli's self-cultivated public persona ... nor his controversial statements about politics or culture," Matsumoto said.

But she did say his conduct after the verdict made her doubt the sincerity of his remorse. She cited his bragging after the verdict that he would be sentenced to time served. And she quoted one piece of correspondence in which he wrote: "F--- the feds."

Nation

Vet in California attack had trouble after return from war

YOUNTVILLE, Calif. (AP)—The man who killed three women after a daylong siege at a Northern California veterans home had trouble adjusting to regular life after he returned from the Afghanistan war and had been kicked out of the treatment program designed to help him.

As family and friends of the victims tried to make sense of the tragedy, authorities offered little information Saturday about why Albert Wong, 36, attacked The Pathway Home and whether he targeted his victims. Those who knew the women said they had dedicated their lives to helping those suffering like Wong, and they would've been in a good position to assist him had Friday's hostage situation ended differently.

"We lost three beautiful people yesterday," Yountville Mayor John Dubar said. "We also lost one of our heroes who clearly had demons that resulted in the terrible tragedy that we all experienced here."

Authorities said Wong, a former Army rifleman who served a year in Afghanistan in 2011-2012 and returned highly decorated, went to the campus about 50 miles (85 kilometers) north of San Francisco on Friday morning, slipping into a going-away party for some employees of The Pathway Home. He let some people leave, but kept the three.

Police said a Napa Valley sheriff's deputy exchanged gunshots with Wong around 10:30 a.m. but after that nothing was heard from him. From a vet-center crafts building across the street from the PTSD center, witness Sandra Woodford said she saw lawmen with guns trained outside, but said the only shots she heard were inside Pathway early Friday. "This rapid live-fire of rounds going on, at least 12," Woodford said.

Hours later, authorities found four bodies, including Wong.

His victims were identified as The Pathway Home Executive Director Christine Loeber, 48; Clinical Director Jennifer Golick, 42; and Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba, 32, a clinical psychologist with the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. A family friend told The Associated Press that Gonzales was seven months pregnant.

"These brave women were accomplished professionals who dedicated their careers to serving our nation's veterans, working closely with those in the greatest need of attention after deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan," The Pathway Home said in a statement.

Wong always wanted to join the Army and serve his country and was "soft-spoken and calm," said Cissy Sherr, who was Wong's legal guardian when he was a child.

Sherr and her husband became Wong's guardians after his father died and his mother developed health problems, she said. He moved back in with them for a little while in 2013 after he returned from his deployment in Afghanistan and kept in touch online.

"He always had a great smile on his face," she said. "He didn't have a traditional upbringing but still he just became a fine young man. I can't imagine what happened. It doesn't make any sense to me."

Wong wanted to go back to school to study computers and business and thought the Pathway House program would help him readjust after the Army, she said.

Dunbar, a member of The Pathway Home's board of directors, said the program has served over 450 veterans in more than a decade. Six members are currently in the nonprofit men's residential recovery program for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who suffer from PTSD or traumatic brain injuries, he said.

The program is housed at the Veterans Home of California-Yountville in the Napa Valley wine country region. The largest veterans home in the nation cares for about 1,000 elderly and disabled vets.

Golick's father-in-law, Mike Golick, said in an interview she had recently expelled Wong from the program. After Wong entered the building, Golick called her husband to say she had been taken hostage by the former soldier, her father-in-law said.

He didn't hear from his wife again.

AP

A woman, who declined to give her name, cries after placing flowers at a sign at the Veterans Home of California, the morning after a hostage situation in Yountville, Calif., on Saturday, March 10, 2018.

Gun background check system riddled with flaws

SEATTLE (AP)—Recent mass shootings have spurred Congress to try to improve the nation's gun background check system that has failed on numerous occasions to keep weapons out of the hands of dangerous people.

The problem with the legislation, experts say, is that it only works if federal agencies, the military, states, courts and local law enforcement do a better job of sharing information with the background check system—and they have a poor track record in doing so. Some of the nation's most horrific mass shootings have revealed major holes in the database reporting system, including massacres at Virginia Tech in 2007 and at a Texas church last year.

Despite the failures, many states still aren't meeting key benchmarks with their background check reporting that enable them to receive federal grants similar to what's being proposed in the current legislation.

"It's a completely haphazard system—sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't," said Georgetown University law professor Larry Gostin. "When you're talking about school children's lives, rolling the dice isn't good enough."

In theory, the FBI's background check database, tapped by gun dealers during a sale, should have a definitive list of people who are prohibited from having guns—people who have been convicted of crimes, committed to mental institutions, received dishonorable discharges or are addicted to drugs.

But in practice, the database is incomplete.

It's up to local police, sheriff's offices, the military, federal and state courts, Indian tribes and in some places, hospitals and treatment providers, to send criminal or mental health records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS, but some don't always do so, or they may not send them in a timely fashion.

Some agencies don't know what to send; states often lack funds needed to ensure someone handles the data; no system of audits exists to find out who's not reporting; and some states lack the political will to set up a functioning and efficient reporting process, experts said.

"The system is riddled with opportunities for human error," said Kristin Brown, co-president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

A proposal in Congress seeks to establish a structured system for federal agencies to send records to the NICS database. Sen. John Cornyn of Texas says the legislation—often referred to as "Fix NICS"—will save lives.

"We should start with what's achievable and what will actually save lives, and that describes the 'Fix NICS' bill. It will help prevent dangerous individuals with criminal convictions and a history of mental illness from buying firearms," the Republican said.

Michigan seeks changes to abuse reporting law after Nassar

LANSING, Mich. (AP)—Michigan is looking to shore up its law that requires certain people to report suspected child sexual abuse to authorities to address gaps that were exposed after disgraced former sports doctor Larry Nassar admitted to sexually assaulting female athletes.

Nassar's victims are spearheading the initiative, saying he could have been stopped decades ago if coaches, athletic trainers or others at Michigan State University had listened to them. More than 250 women and girls have said the now-imprisoned Nassar molested them with his ungloved hands under the guise of medical treatment.

No one has faced charges yet for not reporting the abuse, but multiple investigations are underway into Michigan State's handling of complaints.

Like all other states, Michigan requires health providers, psychologists, teachers, police, clergy and others to report suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities. A bill up for approval by the state Senate would add college employees and youth sports coaches, trainers and volunteers.

Additional legislation would increase potential punishments. Paid professionals who willfully do not report suspected abuse or neglect could face a felony charge and up to two years in prison, up from what is now a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum 93 days in jail.

"It puts stronger incentives in place to properly motivate adults to respond to disclosures of sexual assaults," said Rachael Denhollander, who was 15 when Nassar assaulted her in his campus office in 2000. "As much as it is difficult and as much as we don't want to recognize this fact, there are adults who will not be motivated by an ethical, moral code to report sexual assault of children."

Eleven other states already require college employees to report abuse. Eighteen more require anyone aware of suspected abuse or neglect to report it, according to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In five states, all youth coaches—not just those who are school employees—are mandatory reporters.

Michigan isn't the only state to explore changes. Illinois is looking to increase the punishment for not reporting abuse and may require coaches and other athletic workers to undergo training. Legislation in Georgia would give victims of childhood sexual abuse more time to sue for damages—something Michigan is also considering .

Michigan's legislation would address ambiguity surrounding who must report abuse. Nassar's accusers contend in a lawsuit that four current or former Michigan employees they told—including ex- gymnastics head coach Kathie Klages, Nassar's physician supervisors and a psychology professor who saw one victim through his separate private practice—were mandated reporters already.

Asia

Trump believes N. Korea will keep word on missile tests

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Donald Trump said Saturday he believes North Korea will abide by its pledge to suspend missile tests while he prepares for a summit by May with the North's leader, Kim Jong Un.

Trump noted in a tweet that North Korea has refrained from such tests since November and said Kim "has promised not to do so through our meetings."

"I believe they will honor that commitment," the president wrote.

The president continued the optimistic tone Saturday night when he led a rally for the Republican candidate in a special House race in western Pennsylvania. When he mentioned Kim's name, the crowd booed but Trump responded: "No, it's very positive ... no, after the meeting you may do that, but now we have to be very nice because let's see what happens, let's see what happens."

Trump shocked many inside and outside his administration Thursday when he told South Korean officials who had just returned from talks in North Korea that he would be willing to accept Kim's meeting invitation.

Earlier Saturday, Trump tweeted that China was pleased that he was pursuing a diplomatic solution rather than "going with the ominous alternative" and that Japan is "very enthusiastic" about the agreed-to talks.

Trump has spoken with both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe since Thursday's announcement, and said Xi "appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative."

Trump had previously threatened North Korea with "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

Trump also said China, North Korea's most important ally and trading partner, "continues to be helpful!" Trump has repeatedly urged China to do more to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear program.

Trump said in another tweet Saturday that Abe is "is very enthusiastic about talks with North Korea" and that the two discussed how to narrow the U.S.-Japan trade deficit. Trump wrote, "It will all work out!"

Trump misspelled Xi's first name as "Xinping" in the first version of his tweet about China but later corrected it.

AP

A woman walks by a huge screen showing U.S. President Donald Trump, left, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, in Tokyo, Friday, March 9, 2018.

Rohingya living in 'no man's land' insist they will stay

ALONG THE BANGLADESH-MYANMAR BORDER (AP)—From their home, a tent hastily erected in a grassy field, the young Muslim Rohingya couple can see the village they left behind last year, fleeing attacks by Buddhist mobs and Myanmar security forces.

They arrived in a no man's land, one of the small, ill-defined areas that exist at the cloudiest edges of the borderlands, places that seem to be neither Myanmar nor Bangladesh. While nearly every other Rohingya refugee who crossed the border has sought protection in the immense camps a few miles deeper into Bangladesh, these people say they will go no farther.

"My ancestors' graves are there," said Abdul Naser, gesturing toward his village, less than 100 meters (yards) away. "Sometimes, I walk close to the barbed wire fence and touch my land, and I cry in the dark."

But a few weeks ago, things changed. Myanmar deployed more soldiers to the border, some of whom began coming to within 10 meters (yards) of the refugees' homes. They shout insults at the Rohingya, and they throw empty whiskey bottles, the refugees say. They have set up speakers that blare announcements, insisting people go farther into Bangladesh.

Because to Myanmar, no man's land doesn't exist at all.

"We cannot accept the term 'no man's land' because that is our land," said Nyan Myint Kyaw, Myanmar's deputy commander of the border police. Shifting rivers may have washed away some border markers, he says, and fences may not have been erected everywhere. But he insists the 6,000 or so Rohingya who think they live between the two countries are actually living inside Myanmar.

It is easy to get confused on the border, where many areas are not marked at all and where it's sometimes unclear if a fence marks someone's personal land, or if it demarcates the frontier. Making things more complicated, Myanmar places its border fences 45 meters (150 feet) from the actual boundary line.

While Myanmar insists all the hazy territory is their land, its security forces—as well as Bangladeshi security forces—are also very careful to avoid entering places seen as a no man's land, presumably fearing accidental clashes and diplomatic trouble.

Myanmar says the additional soldiers were deployed to stop possible cross-border attacks by Rohingya militants, though no such attacks are known to have occurred. When Bangladesh protested the deployments, Myanmar dismissed their complaints.

"This is not like we are trying to invade Bangladesh," Myanmar spokesman Zaw Htay said in early March. "These are only actions taken against the terrorist groups."

The Rohingya have long lived at the ragged fringes of life in Myanmar, denied citizenship and many of the most basic rights. They are derided as "Bengalis," and many in Myanmar believe they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Muslims in an overwhelmingly Buddhist nation, most live in poverty in Myanmar's Rakhine state, next to Bangladesh.

The most recent problems began in August, when Rohingya insurgents launched a series of unprecedented attacks on Myanmar security posts. Myanmar responded with overwhelming force, burning Muslim villages with the help of Buddhist mobs, raping women, looting homes and carrying out massacres. Some 700,000 Rohingya fled the attacks into Bangladesh. Aid groups say more than 6,700 people were killed.

The United Nations refugee agency has appealed for protection for the borderland Rohingya.

The agency "is concerned about the safety of a group of vulnerable Rohingya women, men and children from Myanmar, who have been living in a so-called 'no man's land,'" the agency said in a statement. "People who have fled violence in their country must be granted safety and protection."

ASIAN BRIEFS

Afghan official says Taliban attack kills 15 security forces

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An Afghan official says at least 15 security forces have been killed in an attack by Taliban fighters in western Farah province. Fared Bakhtawar, head of the provincial council, said Saturday that seven army commandos and eight police are among those 15 killed in Bala Buluk district. Bakhtawar said three other security forces are missing and more than 30 insurgents were killed in the battle. Gen. Dawlat Waziri, spokesman for the Defense Ministry, confirmed the attack but said only four soldiers were killed and two wounded. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujhaid claimed responsibility for the attack. In recent months, Farah province has witnessed an increase in attacks by insurgents against security forces and local officials have requested the deployment of more forces in the province.

Norway, US, help Philippines capture cybersex suspect

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Norwegian and U.S. law enforcers have helped the Philippines capture a man they say exploited children by having them join sex videos which he then showed to paying foreign clients online, officials said Friday. National Bureau of Investigation Director Dante Gierran said Norwegian and U.S. law enforcers joined Filipino authorities in a raid Thursday that led to the arrest of the suspect, Anselmo Ico Jr., and the rescue of five of his alleged minor victims in a poor village in Malolos city, north of Manila. Such arrests and rescues in the Philippines point to lucrative crimes in which children, even toddlers, are made to remove their clothes and touch themselves in obscene ways while adults, often their parents, train video cameras on them in exchange for payment from pedophiles and other customers abroad. Philippine police have collaborated with their counterparts in Europe, Australia and the U.S. to investigate, hunt suspects and prosecute them to fight a crime that thrives in poverty, unemployment and other dire social conditions.

India, France to work for Indian Ocean freedom of navigation

NEW DELHI (AP)—India and France pledged Saturday to work together to ensure freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean and signed an agreement to expedite construction of a major nuclear power plant in India by a French company. After talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also highlighted a solar alliance and cooperation between the two countries in defense, security, technology, space and counterterrorism. Macron, who arrived in New Delhi on Friday for a four-day visit to India, said France and India should be key partners. "And I dream to have more and more Indian citizens coming to France—studying, becoming entrepreneurs, creating startups—and I want my country to be a best partner in Europe, an entry point," Macron said at a reception ceremony. "I want to double the number of Indian students coming to France," he said later on Twitter. Modi said it was critical for the two countries to cooperate in the Indian Ocean region.

World

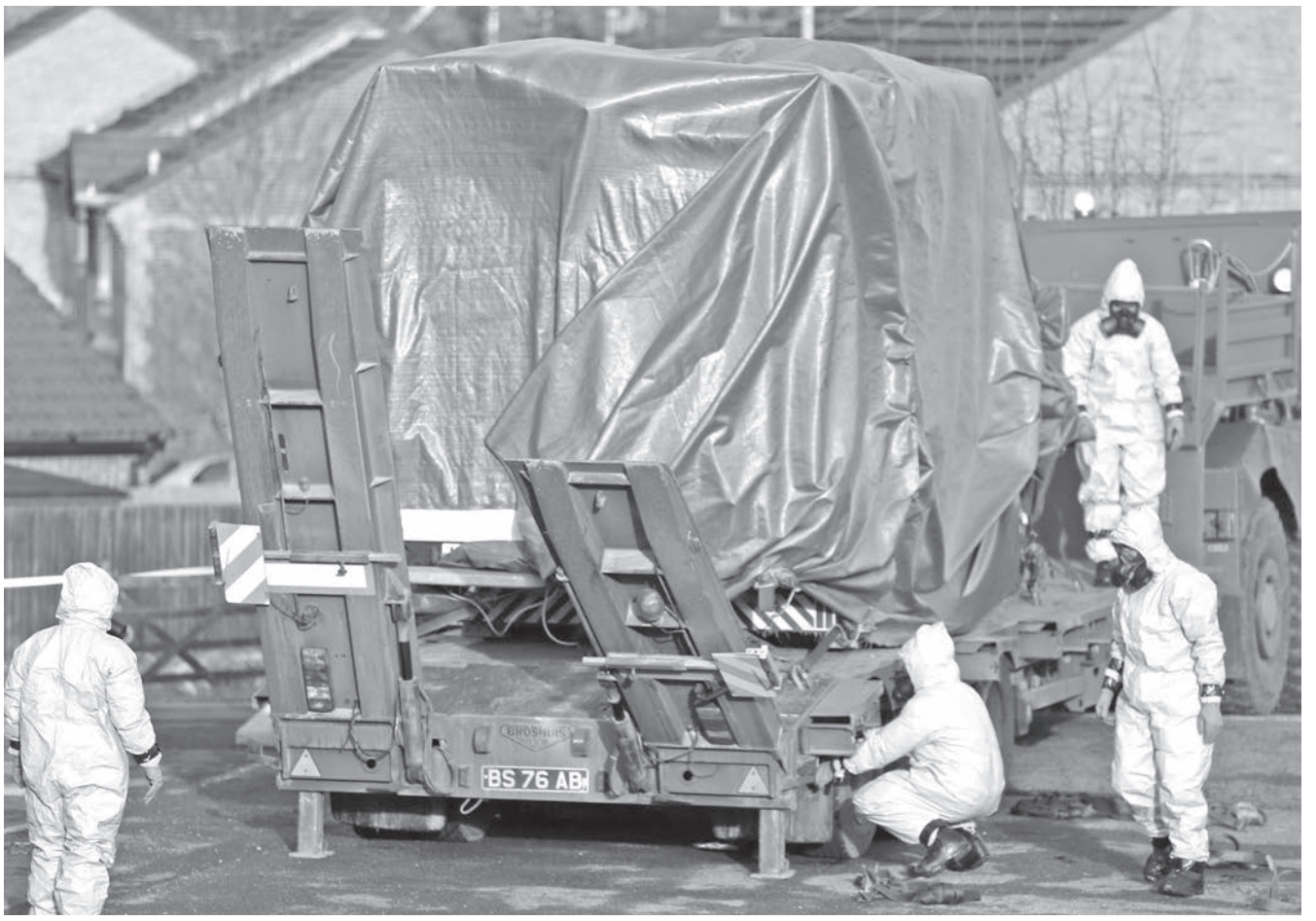
Spy's poisoning is latest case to stir suspicion of Russia

LONDON (AP)—Britain offers wealthy Russians many attractions: London's culture, bucolic countryside, exclusive schools, and a global financial hub. But for some former spies and foes of Russian President Vladimir Putin, a move west has been lethal.

Sergei Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer who was convicted of helping British agents and then freed in a spy swap, could become next in the disturbing pattern. Skripal, 66, and daughter, Yulia, 33, are in critical condition in England. British officials say they were exposed to a rare nerve agent.

Some lawmakers and a former top law enforcement official say the poisonings have hallmarks of deaths in the U.K. and the United States with links to Russia. They want an investigation to examine if enemies of the Russian government have been assassinated on British soil.

The deaths that have aroused suspicions include a man who was impaled on the spikes of an iron fence; a former Putin aide found in a Washington hotel room with blunt force injuries; and an ex-spy poisoned with radioactive tea.



AP

Investigators in protective clothing move a wrapped ambulance from the South Western Ambulance Service station in Harnham, near Salisbury, England, as police and members of the armed forces probe the suspected nerve agent attack on Russian spy double agent Sergei Skripal, Saturday March 10, 2018.

British officials have not openly blamed the Russian government for the brazen assault on the Skripals in Salisbury. The father and daughter were found comatose on March 4 in the medieval city where Sergei Skripal had a home.

Author Joe Serio, who spent nearly 10 years with the anti-organized crime unit of Moscow's police and wrote "Investigating the Russian Mafia," said Britain is a popular destination for Russian émigrés because it's "the gateway to the West, the seat of the language, the seat of the empire, the seat of major finance."

None of that makes the country a perfect place to hide, though, Serio said.

"Russian leaders seem to go out of their way to get rid of anybody that seems to be in their way, someone who's betrayed them, someone who's interrupting the money flow," he said. "They just go wherever they have to go to get their guy."

Yvette Cooper, chairwoman of the U.K. Parliament committee that reviews police and intelligence matters, said a string of unexplained deaths must be re-examined in light of what happened to Skripal and his daughter.

Cooper cited a 2017 BuzzFeed News investigation of 14 deaths that may have involved foul play. One was Scot Young's. He worked with Putin's critics before his body was found impaled on railings outside his London apartment in 2014. Police treated it as an apparent suicide, although the coroner said the evidence was inconclusive.

Of all the deaths that have set off alarms, the slow poisoning of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko's life is the best documented. Litvinenko, who had defected to Britain and publicly criticized Putin, died in November 2006, three weeks after drinking tea containing the radioactive isotope polonium-210.

While he wasted away on a hospital bed, the ex-spy blamed Putin. A decade later, a laborious public inquiry concluded he had been killed by Russia's security service, "probably" with Putin's approval.

WORLD BRIEFS

Kenya president and opposition leader agree to unify country

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Kenya's president and opposition leader announced Friday they will work together to unite the country, which has been divided along ethnic lines following last year's disputed elections. President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga spoke after holding discussions, the first talks between the two since the elections sparked widespread turmoil. The Kenyan leaders agreed that their meeting was not the result of pressure from Western countries. "This is a purely domestic initiative," Odinga's spokesman, Dennis Onyango, said. The Kenyan politicians' initiative to bring the country together was welcomed by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who arrived in Nairobi Friday to start a three-day visit. "This is a very positive step in our view, and while we know addressing Kenya's ethnic and political divisions will take some time and effort, today both of these men showed great leadership in coming together," Tillerson said after meeting Kenyatta. "All the credit goes to the two leaders."

Colombia's former guerrillas face first electoral test

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)—Colombia's former leftist guerrillas face their first electoral test as a political party Sunday in congressional voting also seen as a measure of the strength of the country's factions two months before presidential elections. Analysts see the balloting for the Senate and House of Representatives as a test of the democratic viability of the FARC, whose fighters laid down their arms following a historic peace pact last year and converted into a political movement. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia gave their new party the same FARC initials as the rebel group. "The FARC are in a tough position," says Leon Valencia, a former combatant who now directs the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation, a political think tank. "If they get a low turnout, as is expected, their congressmen will be shunned. They will not be seen as true representatives of the people," said Valencia, referring to the fact that the FARC is guaranteed 10 seats in congress under the terms of the peace deal that ended more than a half century of brutal conflict.

Palestinians: 19-year-old killed in West Bank clashes

JERUSALEM (AP)—The Palestinian Health Ministry says a 19-year-old has been killed in clashes in the northern West Bank. It said he was shot in the chest Saturday during confrontations with Israeli settlers and later declared dead. There were conflicting reports as to whether the Palestinian was shot by Israeli settlers or military troops. Israel's military said Palestinians approached the Itzhar settlement and clashed with local residents. It says troops arrived and fired live rounds to disperse the confrontation. Palestinians have staged regular protests, which have often turned violent, since President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December. The Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as their future capital and view Trump's decision as siding with Israel on one of the thorniest issues at the heart of the conflict.

Syrian troops cut major roads in suburbs of Damascus

BEIRUT (AP)—Syrian government forces succeeded Saturday in their deepest push yet into the eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus, cutting off a major highway that made it hard to move between three parts of the rebel-held area, and inflicting a major blow to opposition fighters who have vowed not to surrender.

Syrian state media and an opposition monitoring group said government forces have laid siege on the rebel-held town of Harasta, cutting it off from the rest of the suburbs known as eastern Ghouta.

Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said government forces have also cut off the main highway that links northern Ghouta with its southern parts, isolating the town of Douma, the largest in the area.

The government-controlled Syrian Central Military Media said troops captured the Kilani gas station on the main highway linking Douma with Harasta and those two areas with the rest of eastern Ghouta. Residents will have to rely on unpaved roads to move in eastern Ghouta but that is difficult because of the intensity of shelling and airstrikes, activists said.

"The regime has cut Ghouta into three parts by cutting the main roads linking them," said the Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman.

The government and its Russian backers, determined to wrest eastern Ghouta from rebel control after seven years of war, recently intensified the shelling and bombardment to clear the way for its troops to advance on the ground. Nearly 1,000 people have been killed in the past three weeks of relentless bombardment.

SCMM said troops on Saturday reached the center of the town of Misraba, adding that opposition fighters are crumbling amid the offensive. Syrian state TV aired live footage from inside the town and saying that troops are less than a kilometer (0.6 miles) from troops on the western side. Reaching them would physically cut northern parts of eastern Ghouta from its southern parts.

"The Syrian Arab Army soldiers marching from three sides could meet soon," said Rabih Dibi, a reporter with state-run Ikhbariyah TV in his report from Misraba.

TV footage later showed dozens of men, women and children crowded in an underground basement in Misraba after troops captured the area. The TV station said authorities will move the nearly 60 people to a safe location where they will be given shelter and food.

"Once you came in we felt well," said one of the women in the basement. Another man said there were 15 families in the basement who have been hiding for days.

Ikhbariyah reported that government forces and their allies captured farms outside the village of Aftris and are now marching toward the village. It added that troops are also moving toward the town of Jisreen on the southern edge of eastern Ghouta.

The Observatory reported that troops are advancing under the cover of attacks by warplanes and helicopter gunships and confirmed that government forces captured large parts of Misraba.

Focus

For many factory towns, white collar job loss hurts the most

AP

In this Oct. 24, 2017, photo, pedestrians pass under a freight train overpass as they walk up Peach Street in Erie, Pa. Since 2008, Erie has suffered a hidden and potentially more devastating exodus: The loss of well-paid white-collar jobs.

ERIE, Pa. (AP)—With the abandoned smokestacks off the bay and ramshackle factories along 12th Street, it's easy to pin the blame for this industrial city's plight on the loss of manufacturing jobs to China and Mexico.

Many, including President Donald Trump, hold the belief that shuttered factories are what primarily ails Erie and other aging blue-collar company towns.

Yet since 2008, Erie has suffered a less-known and potentially more devastating exodus of well-paying white-collar jobs. Half its CEOs—220 jobs—have disappeared. The city has shed 8 percent of its accountants, 10 percent of its computer workers, 40 percent of its engineers and 20 percent of its lawyers, according to government data analyzed by The Associated Press.

They are the professional class jobs that buttressed Erie's manufacturing might. And they are the type of work that has increasingly become the backbone of the U.S. economy.

After reviewing Labor Department figures dating to 2008, the AP found that a third of major metro areas—nearly 80 communities—are shedding a greater percentage of white-collar than blue-collar jobs.

In Ohio, such cities as Toledo and Canton have had a harder time retaining jobs in offices than on factory floors. It's a similar story in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. And in Wichita and Topeka, Kansas. And Birmingham, Alabama. And Decatur, Illinois.

"That's one of the most painful aspects of the economic decline of these manufacturing centers: They get hit twice," said Enrico Moretti, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley. "First, they lose the factories. But second, and most importantly, they lose everyone who was supportive of those factories."

It's that second hit that increasingly matters nearly four decades since U.S. manufacturing employment peaked. Without a foundation of white collar jobs, it becomes difficult for these areas to reinvent themselves in an era when the economy more and more requires specialized knowledge and technological skill.

"It's painful because it makes it even harder for the community to recover," Moretti said.

Trump had rallied voters on the promise that he would restore factory jobs to revive areas that had lost them. But the data show how higher-paying occupations are abandoning smaller cities, taking with them a generation of workers who could otherwise start new companies or serve existing businesses.

The AP reviewed data on employment by occupations from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics and compared metro area figures with national averages. Jobs that were categorized as white collar include managerial, administrative and sales positions. Blue-collar occupations include production, craft, machine operation and transportation positions.

White-collar workers are increasingly shifting from smaller cities and settling in such thriving metro areas as Seattle, Nashville, Chicago and Silicon Valley. As those higher-paying occupations become more highly concentrated, the wealth they generate is less likely to filter through the rest of the country to areas with a long-standing legacy of manufacturing. And while Trump and other political leaders vow to boost businesses with tax cuts, lower taxes may do little for communities with fewer white collar workers who could plow them into new businesses.

In Erie, many business leaders say the city mainly needs to keep and attract more white-collar workers.

Its largest for-profit employer, Erie Insurance, recently restored an old armory and has been renovating old homes nearby, gradually turning part of the city into a corporate campus. Out of a headquarters built as a replica of Independence Hall, with hand-blocked French wallpaper depicting an American Revolution battle, the insurer is leading a private $40 million effort to fill the downtown with apartments and retail, in hopes that a friendlier streetscape will draw more employers and college graduates.

For the company's CEO, the mission is personal. Tim NeCastro has five adult children; only one has chosen to stay local.

"If this is successful, 10 years from now, two more of my kids will move to Erie," he said. "They will find a reason to get back here."

It's the same high-stakes gamble many small- and mid-size cities face. Children who left for college aren't returning home as they once did. Many are choosing to live in metro areas or communities anchored by a major university, like Pittsburgh, 130 miles south of Erie.

In these larger cities, it's easier for white-collar workers to quit their jobs to join employers that offer more money or opportunities for advancement. This trend has turned certain larger cities into magnets that draw employers and better-paid workers away from smaller cities.

"Size matters, and I think, this dynamic is accelerating," said Mark Muro, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Census Bureau data show, for example, that Chicago added nearly 40,000 college graduates under age 35 since the Great Recession began in late 2007. Boston gained about 10,000, Denver 25,000. Compare that with Toledo, which lost 1,600 young college graduates.

In a 2016 campaign speech in Erie, Trump didn't touch on this brain drain. Rather, he blamed unfair trade—from the North American Free Trade Agreement to the entrance of China into the World Trade Organization—for the struggles in those communities.

"We will stop these countries from taking our companies," Trump said. "You can't do well when you have a government that is so stupid, that is so incompetent."

This argument helped win him Erie County, which had twice voted for Barack Obama. But in the 12 months since Trump's election, Erie has shed about 800 jobs. The number of people seeking jobs declined by more than 2,000. Trump has announced taxes on steel and aluminum imports in hopes of bolstering U.S. industry.

Community leaders in Erie note that manufacturing remains a strength for northwest Pennsylvania. But it seems impossible to restore a long-gone era of prosperity that was built on factory work.

Erie's General Electric locomotive plant peaked with roughly 20,000 workers just after World War II, when whirling assembly lines had helped to secure an Allied victory and an economic boom that followed helped propel growth. Hammermill Paper relied on trucks stacked with logs that rumbled through downtown to its paper mill. Lord Corp. made industrial coatings. Zurn made plumbing equipment.

But as the market for locomotives declined, the GE plant steadily downsized. It will soon have a headcount closer to 3,000. Hammermill was bought by International Paper in 1986. Its jobs went to Memphis.

Lord recently replaced its old plant in Erie with a new factory nearby, but its headquarters remains in North Carolina. Zurn decided in 2015 to move its base to Milwaukee because it saw Wisconsin as a hub for "global water industry leaders."

Many of the factory buildings are decades old, too dilapidated and maze-like to efficiently run an assembly line that needs wide-open spaces. Some long-standing factory workers in Erie earn a healthy $35 an hour. But that's more than many companies are now willing to pay for factory work, thereby limiting how much manufacturing can fuel prosperity in cities like Erie.

Bob Glowacki, who heads a real estate management company and once served on Erie's city council, said the city must look beyond manufacturing.

"It's fine that Donald Trump says he's going to get all the companies that moved to China to come back to the United States," he said. "But if that happened, you're only going to get 20 percent of those jobs back. Technology has replaced them. How do you change that in Erie?"

What people are truly nostalgic for, Glowacki said, isn't merely the grind of factory jobs but the community fostered by the old ethnic neighborhoods, with their churches and clubs where residents once gathered. Chain restaurants in strip malls outside the city proper have supplanted many of these institutions. Housing vacancies have risen around the downtown core.

So instead, Erie's goal is now more to recapture some of those lost white-collar jobs by renovating the downtown. Business leaders see a model to replicate in the Cincinnati neighborhood of "Over the Rhine" with its charming Italianate brick buildings and hipster restaurants.

After taking a tour through Erie's neighborhoods and industrial sites, Glowacki, 66, said he feels hopeful that the city now has a plan of action.

"I've never felt more positive about what is happening in Erie than I do right now," he said.

Yet the clouds remain as the fates of white-collar and blue-collar workers remain entwined.

In October, GE Transportation announced layoffs for 570 unionized workers at the locomotive plant. The move accompanied the loss of 200 management and other white collar jobs at the same plant, said Scott Slawson, who represents the GE workers as president of the local union.

GE said it transferred work out of Erie because of a tough market for locomotives and a need to be more cost competitive in a global rail market. The company has shifted 225 hourly jobs to a plant in Fort Worth, Texas, to try to preserve U.S. jobs, Deia Campanelli, a spokeswoman, said in an email.

But in Erie, ripple effects from previous layoffs pummeled more than 40 local companies that helped supply the factory. The company is also seeking to divest its transportation division, which is spreading uncertainty for every class of workers in Erie.

"When that corporate jet leaves Erie, there's not room for everyone on that jet—there's very few seats," Slawson said.

Health & Wellness

PARENTAL GUIDANCE

How to tell if your child is depressed

By BETH WHITEHOUSE
NEWSDAY/TNS

Depression in kids appears to start as early as age 11, according to a new study published in the journal of Translational Psychiatry. How can parents tell if a child that young is depressed?

"The child may not say, 'I'm sad,'" says Dr. Victor Fornari, director of child and adolescent psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, Queens, N.Y. Here are signs to watch for:

Depression often begins in children as high anxiety, Fornari says. They may refuse to go to school or may worry about a parent dying. They may have headaches, stomachaches or pretend to be sick. They may be afraid to fail or be rejected. Things they felt comfortable doing they may not be comfortable doing anymore.

"With 11- or 12-year-olds, usually you look for a change in functioning," Fornari says. It could be a change in sleep habits or appetite or a loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed.

"Irritability can be a hallmark of depression," Fornari says. "Everything annoys them. They fight with the parents. They fight with siblings." Parents think it's a discipline issue, but at age 11 kids aren't usually so rebellious, Fornari says. "They're having a problem; they're not being bad," he says.

Children may have negative thoughts about themselves or their bodies.

They may be extremely sensitive to being teased. "When people are feeling bad, comments can really feel like harpoons," Fornari says.

If parents suspect depression, they should contact the pediatrician or family doctor for an evaluation. Talking to the child's teachers can also help, because they may also notice changes in behavior or demeanor. A child can be referred to a mental health professional for cognitive behavioral therapy or medication if necessary.

Depression in kids appears to start as early as age 11, according to a new study published in the journal of Translational Psychiatry.
DREAMSTIME/TNS

Healthy Living

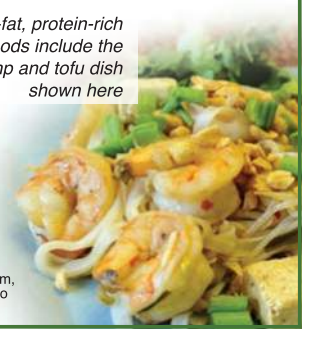
Hunger reducer

Eating low-fat protein makes you feel less hungry and may help you lose weight.

Pumping up the glucose

- Protein increases glucose production in small intestine
- Liver detects glucose, signals brain that stomach is full

Low-fat, protein-rich foods include the shrimp and tofu dish shown here



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10 Reasons you need a pet in your life

By BARTON GOLDSMITH
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE/TNS

I have seen how having an animal in your life can make things much better for all concerned. Here are some reasons why.

1 A pet's love never fails. No matter what, the animal that you have bonded with will always love you and remember you. Even if you cannot return that unconditional love, just knowing that it is there will make your life better.

2 Caring for something other than yourself is emotionally healthy. Giving and getting a little love, even if you have to say "off the couch" 270 times a day, can take your mind off your troubles and help you to see what's really real.

3 It is also physically healthy. If you have a dog, you need to take it (and you) on walks. Cesar Millan says that dogs are happiest when they are walking. And it's common knowledge that taking regular walks is also good for your heart and brain health.

4 An animal in your life will help ease your suffering. If you are dealing with depression, trauma, or anxiety, having a pet will make things better. The relationship is pure healing. There is even a reality show about how dogs can help Veterans dealing with PTSD and parolees trying to work their way back into society.

5 You may not think you have the energy to care for a pet. I have a friend who has been battling cancer for a decade. She got a tiny puppy about a year before it started, and that dog has, without a doubt, helped keep her alive. Even at her weakest, just having her loving pup by her side is such a comfort.

6 Yes, animals do die first. Or, if you move into a place that does not allow animals, you may have to give away your pet. Yes, losing your pet is very painful, but when you think about how much love this animal gave you while with you, it's totally worth the pain of loss.

7 No, pets are not replaceable. Rescuing little Foxy has made things much nicer for our family, but I still miss my Mercy and think of her every day. The connection we had was heart to heart, and caring for her that last year truly changed me.

MONIKA WISNIEWSKA/DREAMSTIME/TNS
No matter what, the animal that you have bonded with will always love you and remember you.

8 Just the act of petting a creature lowers your blood pressure and helps you relax. Next time you are feeling out of sorts, I recommend going to your local shelter and giving some love to an animal there. You won't have to take it home, but notice how you feel when the two of you are exchanging emotional energy. And don't be surprised if you do adopt!

9 Saving a life will make yours better. Some people prefer their new puppy to be from a pet store or bred brand new on a farm, but what about the used ones? All my animals have been rescues, and they are as sweet as can be. All of them have been young, one or two years old at most, so I've gotten to have them for a long time. Besides, if you've ever raised a puppy, you know how hard that can be!

10 Maybe you think you don't have enough room in your heart. You may already have a family to love, and that is totally wonderful. But you may want to consider adding an animal into the mix. I'm sure if you ask your family, they will agree that pets only add more love. They never take it away.

If you want more love in your life, consider a pet. I know not everybody is an animal lover, but if you think you might be, don't deprive yourself of this wonderful gift to humanity.

Dr. Barton Goldsmith, a psychotherapist in Westlake Village, Calif., is the author of "The Happy Couple: How to Make Happiness a Habit One Little Loving Thing at a Time." Follow his daily insights on Twitter at @BartonGoldsmith

Life & Style

Watchdog group: DOJ should investigate porn actress payment

WASHINGTON (AP)—A nonprofit watchdog group has asked the Justice Department and the Office of Government Ethics to investigate whether a secret payment to an adult film actress made prior to the 2016 presidential election may have violated federal law because Donald Trump did not list it on his financial disclosure forms.

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington lodged the civil and criminal complaint on Thursday. The group argues that Trump attorney Michael Cohen's $130,000 payment may have been a loan to Trump and, if so, needed to be disclosed. And CREW noted that special counsel Robert Mueller may also want to investigate because of "a similar pattern of potential blackmail" in personal matters involving Trump.

Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, claimed in a lawsuit filed this week that the $130,000 payment made as part of a nondisclosure agreement was to ensure she didn't share details of an extramarital affair with Trump.

Daniels

Clifford sought to invalidate their agreement in order to "set the record straight." She alleged in the filing that Trump "at all times has been fully aware of the negotiations ... the existence and terms of the Hush Agreement, the payment of $130,000, (and) the use of (Essential Consultants LLC) as a conduit."

CREW argues that Trump's 2016 financial disclosure form did not include any reference to Cohen or Essential Consultants LLC, and that if the allegations are true, it should have. Public officials are required under the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 to report all liabilities beyond $10,000 during the preceding calendar year.

If "Mr. Trump intentionally omitted this material information from his financial disclosures as part of a larger scheme to hide his relationship with Ms. Daniels, that would be no small thing," said Norm Eisen, chairman of CREW.

"The president personally certified these filings, so he may finally face some accountability. ... Remember, the feds got Al Capone for lying on his federal financial submissions (his taxes), not for any underlying offenses," he said.

The letter also states that Cohen is required under the New York Rules of Professional Conduct to keep Trump informed about "all material developments," including settlements, with Clifford.

Cohen has said he paid the porn actress $130,000 out of his own pocket as part of the agreement. He's also said that "neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly."

CNN takes a historical look at the Kennedy family

In this Nov. 9, 1960 file photo, President-elect John F. Kennedy, center, is surrounded by members of his family in the living room of the home of Joseph P. Kennedy, in Hyannisport, Mass. Standing, from left, Ethel Kennedy; Steve Smith and wife, Jean Kennedy; Senator Kennedy; brother Robert, campaign manager; sister, Patricia Lawford; Sargent Shriver; brother Ted's wife, Joan; and British actor Peter Lawford. In foreground, seated from are: Eunice Shriver, sister; mother Rose Kennedy; father, Joseph; Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of John; and Ted Kennedy, brother of the president-elect. AP

NEW YORK (AP)—In the Trump era, the story of the Kennedys has never seemed so distant or, one family member believes, more urgent to tell.

"It's important for people to know that there is another way," said former U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, son of the late Sen. Edward Kennedy. "What people understand to be the paradigm of today, that doesn't have to be the narrative for our country."

He's also interviewed in CNN's new six-part series, "American Dynasties: The Kennedys," that debuts at 9 p.m. EDT on Sunday. Coupled with the premiere of a new series about popes, it's an example of CNN's new approach to historical programming now that it is running out of decades to celebrate.

The Kennedys are one of the most documented families in modern American life, and CNN hopes that its work in the series offers new looks at a familiar story. Sunday's first episode focuses on family patriarch Joseph Kennedy, who wanted to be president himself until his poor performance as U.S. ambassador to Britain during World War II ended that ambition. He transferred that drive to his large family, which culminated in the election of second son John F. Kennedy as president in 1960.

Through the episodes, the series continues through John and brother Bobby's assassinations, Ted Kennedy's long career in the Senate and the varied paths of new Kennedy generations, including the plane crash that killed John F. Kennedy Jr.

While it discusses the family's achievements, the project is not a hagiography. The series discusses JFK's womanizing, the disastrous decision to lobotomize the young Rosemary Kennedy and, in a later episode, Ted Kennedy's involvement in a deadly car accident in Chappaquiddick, Massachusetts.

Jon Favreau to write, produce new 'Star Wars' series

NEW YORK (AP)—That galaxy far, far away keeps expanding. In the latest in a flurry of "Star Wars" spinoffs, the Walt Disney Co. announced Thursday that Jon Favreau will write and executive produce a live-action "Star Wars" series for the company's planned streaming platform.

Disney is readying a streaming service to compete with Netflix, and it has signaled that "Star Wars" will be a major component. The not-yet-named service is planned to launch in late 2019.

"Jon brings the perfect mix of producing and writing talent, combined with a fluency in the Star Wars universe," said Kathleen Kennedy, Lucasfilm president, in a statement. "This series will allow Jon the chance to work with a diverse group of writers and directors and give Lucasfilm the opportunity to build a robust talent base."

Favreau has been a Disney regular, having directed the first two "Iron Man" films for Marvel and 2016's "The Jungle Book." He also helped produce several "Avengers" movies. He's currently prepping a "Lion King" remake to be released in 2019.

He has some "Star Wars" experience, too, having provided a voice for "The Clone Wars" animated series. Favreau also has a role in the upcoming Han Solo spinoff "Solo: A Star Wars Story."

"If you told me at 11 years old that I would be getting to tell stories in the Star Wars universe, I wouldn't have believed you," said Favreau.

Disney has previously announced that "The Last Jedi" writer-director Rian Johnson is developing a new "Star Wars" film trilogy, and that "Game of Thrones" creators D.B. Weiss and David Benioff will write and produce a separate series of "Star Wars" films.

'A Wrinkle in Time' is a big leap for its teenage star

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Storm Reid tried to play it cool when Ava DuVernay told her she'd gotten the lead role in Disney's "A Wrinkle in Time," but it wasn't long before the tears started flowing.

"I flipped out," says Reid, now 14 and in the ninth grade.

The Atlanta-native started acting at age 3 after she told her mother that she wanted to be a "stuperstar." She's had bit roles in television ("NCIS: Los Angeles," ''Chicago P.D.") and film ("12 Years a Slave," ''Sleight"), but nothing even close to something like "A Wrinkle in Time." As the heroine Meg Murry, she is in nearly every frame, navigating mean girls at school, the loss of her father and even interdimensional travel.

Reid

"It's such an important story to be told," says Reid, who had done a book report on the Madeleine L'Engle novel in the 6th grade. "She goes on this beautiful journey and finds herself and becomes more accepting and learns that she is worthy of being loved."

DuVernay saw Reid very early on in the casting process and said every girl after had to measure up to her. Eventually she trusted her initial impulse and went back to Reid.

"This whole thing doesn't work if you don't have a great Meg. She goes from completely depressed to defiant to exuberant to joyful to determined to fighting evil. It's every emotion," says DuVernay. "She has the whole thing on her shoulders. She's incredible."

The experience of filming "A Wrinkle in Time" was incredible, Reid says, not only because it meant acting alongside the likes of Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, Mindy Kaling and Chris Pine, but because of DuVernay's set.

"Our set was so inclusive with women and men and different races and sexualities. It was kind of like the United Nations," Reid says. "She has a beautiful vision and a beautiful mind."

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Disney's 'Black Panther' reaches $1 billion globally

Disney's megahit "Black Panther" has passed the $1 billion mark at the global box office. The studio said Saturday that the milestone is based on Disney's estimate of ticket sales. The announcement comes on the 26th day of release for the blockbuster. The movie is directed by Ryan Coogler and stars Chadwick Boseman and Michael B. Jordan. Disney notes that "Black Panther" is the fifth film in its Marvel universe to reach the milestone. The others are "The Avengers," ''Avengers: Age of Ultron," ''Iron Man 3," and "Captain America: Civil War." The film has made $521 million domestically, becoming the No. 2 superhero release of all time, surpassing "The Dark Knight." ***(AP)***

Report: Obama in discussions to produce shows for Netflix

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Netflix shares surged to an all-time high following the news that Barack Obama and Netflix reportedly are negotiating a deal for the former president and his wife, Michelle, to produce shows exclusively for the streaming service. The proposed deal was reported Friday by The New York Times, which cited people familiar with the discussions who were not identified. The report sent shares to an all-time high of $326.74 earlier. The Los Gatos, California, company's stock reached $326.07 in afternoon trading, marking a gain of nearly 3 percent.

Lisa Bonet says Bill Cosby gave off a 'sinister' energy

NEW YORK (AP)—Lisa Bonet has broken her silence about her former TV father Bill Cosby, saying she isn't surprised he's facing sexual misconduct allegations and claiming he gave off a "sinister" energy. Bonet says in an interview with Net-a-Porter's Porter magazine that she wasn't aware of any inappropriate behavior by Cosby on "The Cosby Show" and "A Different World," though she sensed "darkness." "There was just energy. And that type of sinister, shadow energy cannot be concealed," she says. Cosby faces a retrial on charges he drugged and molested a woman in 2004. Prosecutors describe him as a serial predator. Bonet and Cosby clashed over her starring in the R-rated "Angel Heart." Asked about Cosby's current situation, she says she "just leave(s) all that to karma and justice."

Kristen Wiig cast as Wonder Woman villain Cheetah

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kristen Wiig will play a villain in the next "Wonder Woman" film. Director Patty Jenkins announced on Twitter Friday that Wiig will star as Wonder Woman rival Cheetah in the superhero sequel. Jenkins said in her post that she "can't wait to finally work with one of my favorites" and is very excited by what they have planned. Star Gal Gadot welcomed Wiig to the cast in a follow-up post and added, "This is going to be WONDERful." Jenkins reportedly became the highest-paid female filmmaker in history when she signed on to direct the sequel to the 2017 blockbuster "Wonder Woman." No title has been announced for the film, which is scheduled to hit theaters in December next year.

Sherman Alexie declines literary award

NEW YORK (AP)—Sherman Alexie has declined the Carnegie Medal he received last month, the American Library Association told The Associated Press on Friday. Alexie was given the $5,000 award for nonfiction for his memoir "You Don't Have To Say You Love Me." He has since faced multiple allegations of sexual harassment and issued a statement acknowledging wrongdoing. Jay Asher and James Dashner are among other writers who recently faced similar allegations. The library association did not have immediate comment on whether the decision was solely by Alexie or whether he had been urged to turn the award down. Attempts to reach Alexie on Friday were not immediately successfully. His publisher, Hachette Book Group, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Lorna Luft undergoing tests after collapsing backstage

LONDON (AP)—Singer Lorna Luft, the daughter of Judy Garland, was undergoing tests in a London hospital following an initial diagnosis of a brain tumor after she collapsed backstage at a concert in London. The singer's representative, Victoria Varela, said the 65-year-old Luft collapsed backstage on Friday night and was rushed to the hospital, where she was given an initial diagnosis of a brain tumor. Varela says the singer's husband, Colin Freeman, had been concerned that she was forgetting lyrics and a monologue. Luft was undergoing further tests at London's Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Varela says Luft has been in remission from breast cancer, which she has been battling for six years.

Nun involved in lawsuit with Katy Perry over convent dies

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A nun who was involved in a lawsuit with pop star Katy Perry over the sale of a convent in Los Angeles died Friday after collapsing during a court appearance. Sister Catherine Rose Holzman, 89, had served the church "with dedication and love for many years," Archbishop Jose Gomez said in a statement. Holzman was a member of an order of elderly nuns involved in a dispute over the sale of their convent in the city's Los Feliz neighborhood. Hours before her death, Holzman spoke to KTTV , decrying a judge's ruling that cleared the way for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to sell the convent to Perry. "To Katy Perry, please stop," Holzman said. "It's not doing anyone any good except hurting a lot of people."

TOURIST ATTRACTION AP

Wall Street's "Fearless Girl" statue is draped with a bouquet of flowers to mark International Women's Day, Thursday March 8, 2018, in New York. The statue, which has been a New York City tourist attraction since it was installed to mark International Women's Day one year ago, is staying put for now while city officials figure out where it's going next to spread its message of female empowerment.

Parents blame teen's friends for underage drinking episode

DEAR ABBY: My 15-year-old daughter, "Jenny," went to a sleepover with her two best friends from school last Friday, "Penny" and "Ginger." Penny's parents went out and left the girls alone. They drank some beer. Jenny and Ginger were sober, but Penny also drank some hard liquor and got very drunk. I found out about it the following Monday after Penny texted my daughter and Ginger to tell them how upset and disappointed her parents were and that they were demanding letters of apology from all three girls.

I thought it was over the top, but realized Jenny was in the wrong. That same day Jenny wrote them an email with a heartfelt apology for disrespecting everyone by drinking in their house, for drinking their beer without permission and for allowing their daughter to get drunk (not being a true friend and trying harder to stop her).

Now, the fifth day after the email was confirmed received, my daughter is disappointed that it was never acknowledged. Penny's parents have been known to be dramatic in past dealings with other students and parents. Will you advise me on what I should do? I feel I should let it go and let Jenny figure out how she should choose her friends. She has ditched a friend who wasn't a good influence on her without us forcing her to.

JENNY'S MOM IN CANADA

DEAR MOM: There is plenty of blame to go around. Penny's parents shouldn't have left three teenagers alone with liquor available. While I can't blame them for being upset after coming home and finding their daughter smashed and the other two "tiddly," they were wrong to expect Jenny and Ginger to have prevented their daughter from misbehaving.

I do not agree that asking for a written apology was over the top. And under the circumstances, I don't think your daughter's letter needed acknowledgment. Let it go, with a firm lecture to your daughter about underage drinking and the consequences that will follow if you find out it happens again.

DEAR ABBY: A couple of years ago, I ran into "John," an old friend who was going through a divorce. We began a wonderful relationship, although he was having a hard time emotionally. I was John's confidante and best friend. About six months after the divorce was final, his ex-wife found out he was with me. She decided she wanted him back, and he reconciled with her.

John and I still talk, and since then they have broken up three or four additional times. I want him back, but only if she's completely out of the picture. She's a master manipulator and uses their adult kids and grandchildren to control him. How can I get it through John's head that if he stands his ground, she will go away and find someone else? -- STAYING WITH IT IN OHIO

DEAR STAYING: If you think John's wife (ex?) will ever be completely out of the picture, you are mistaken. She will always be there in some capacity because of the children and grandchildren. If you can't accept that fact, you should end the relationship before you waste any more time.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $14 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

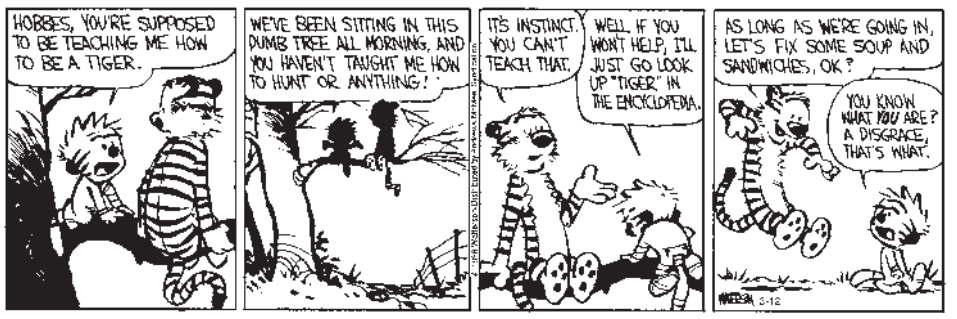
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

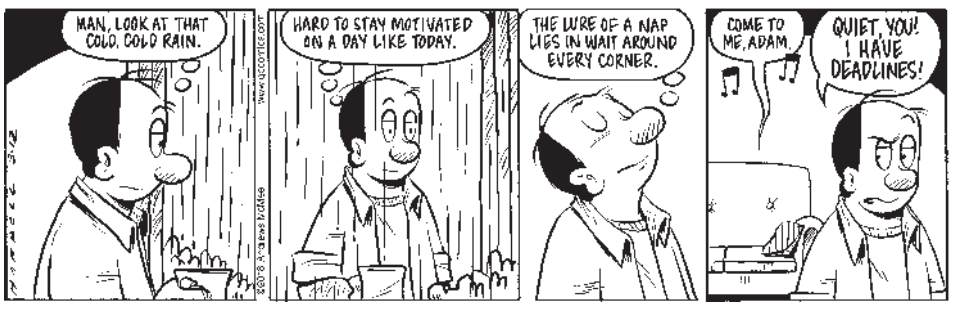

HOBBES, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TEACHING ME HOW TO BE A TIGER.
WE'VE BEEN SITTING IN THIS DUMB TREE ALL MORNING, AND YOU HAVEN'T TAUGHT ME HOW TO HUNT OR ANYTHING!
IT'S INSTINCT. YOU CAN'T TEACH THAT.
WELL IF YOU WON'T HELP, I'LL JUST GO LOOK UP "TIGER" IN THE ENCYCLOPEDIA.
AS LONG AS WE'RE GOING IN, LET'S FIX SOME SOUP AND SANDWICHES, OK?
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE? A DISGRACE, THAT'S WHAT.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

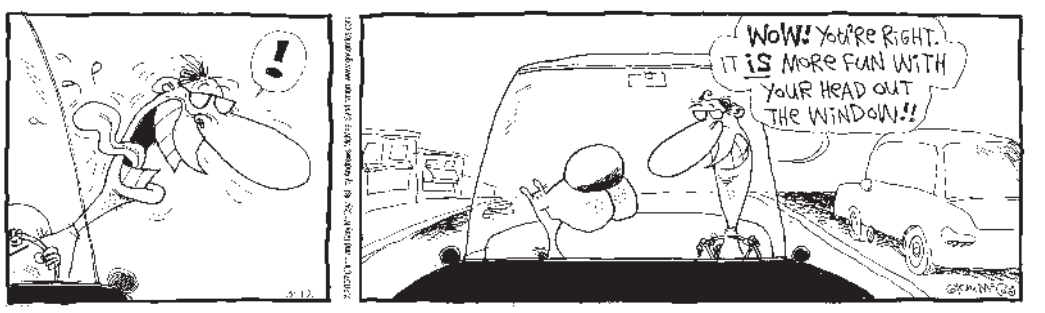
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


MAN, LOOK AT THAT COLD, COLD RAIN.
HARD TO STAY MOTIVATED ON A DAY LIKE TODAY.
THE LURE OF A NAP LIES IN WAIT AROUND EVERY CORNER.
COME TO ME, ADAM.
QUIET, YOU! I HAVE DEADLINES!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Towboat
4 Plot surprise
9 Super Bowl org.
12 Son-gun link
13 Oscar de la —
14 Tram load
15 Obvious choice
17 Service charge
18 New Deal pres.
19 More sizable
21 Sold
24 Crèche figure
25 Punk rock subgenre
26 Squabble
28 Swindle, old style
31 Opulent
33 Erie Canal mule
35 NYC gallery
36 Distend
38 Blue
40 Fanatic
41 Actress Sorvino
43 "Honor Thy Father" author
45 Unjust verdict
47 Genetic letters
48 Before
49 "It's not a problem"
54 Light brown
55 Origami bird
56 Baton Rouge sch.
57 PC key
58 Old anesthetic
59 Jo's sister

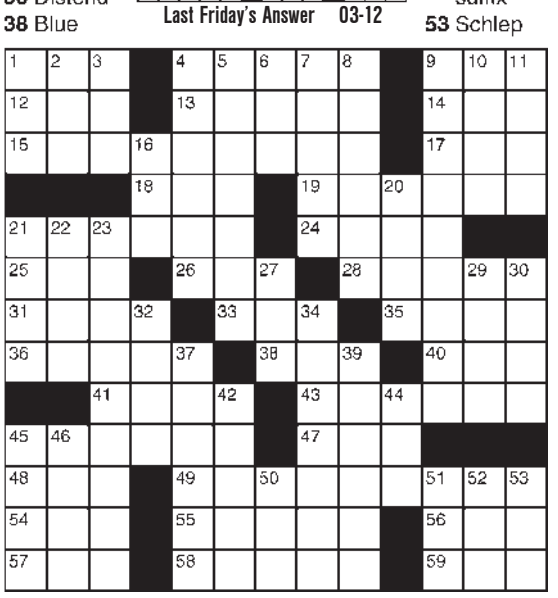
DOWN

1 Heavy weight
2 ET's craft
3 Talk on and on
4 Merchant
5 Eccentrics
6 Hostel
7 Fulton's power
8 Runway surface
9 Restricted airspace
10 Gratis
11 Ogler's look
16 "Mayberry —"
20 Senior moment?
21 Part of speech
22 Actor Jannings
23 Press conference answer
27 Existed
29 Flightless birds
30 Cager Archibald
32 Locks
34 Military loo
37 Stupor
39 Peril
42 Left, at sea
44 Young fellow
45 Test version
46 Russian river
50 "Humbug!"
51 Stately tree
52 Enzyme suffix
53 Schlep

Solution time: 26 mins.

■	A	P	■	C	A	R	■	L	O	M	A	N
A	B	E	■	U	N	O	■	E	V	E	R	T
R	D	S	■	J	O	B	S	E	A	R	C	H
P	U	T	■	O	R	E	O	S	■	■	■	■
S	L	O	P	■	A	S	H	■	E	D	J	A
■	■	■	A	S	K	■	O	C	D	J	C	B
P	I	E	T	A	■	■	■	O	A	S	E	S
J	O	B	H	O	P	■	I	S	M	■	■	■
S	U	B	S	■	R	E	G	■	S	T	A	G
■	■	■	H	F	N	N	A	■	O	R	■	■
B	A	N	G	U	P	J	O	B	■	P	E	A
A	L	I	A	S	■	O	R	B	■	A	N	S
S	L	A	S	H	■	Y	E	A	■	Z	A	P

Last Friday's Answer 03-12



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Aaron Eckhart, 50; Courtney B. Vance, 58; James Taylor, 70; Liza Minnelli, 72.

Happy Birthday: Altering your routine will help you see clearly. Take note of who has been there for you in the past and surround yourself with trusted friends. Be generous with sharing your skills as you move forward. Aiming for equality, balance and honesty will allow you to attract like-minded people. Raise your standards and opportunities will come your way. Your numbers are 5, 12, 21, 27, 36, 39, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* An unpredictable situation will leave you feeling uncertain. Look for information that will give you a good idea of what's actually taking place and who is involved. Once you have the facts, it will be easier to make a decision. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* You may know what you want, but how you go about getting it will make a difference. Making a fuss is not recommended. Be willing to put in the work if you want to make progress. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Take initiative and make your time and effort count. Concentrate on your objectives and be willing to give and take. If you are too generous, you will end up feeling resentful. Focus on achieving equality. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Make changes to your life for the right reasons. If you act in haste or based on emotions, you will regret it. Look for solutions that will benefit everyone. A relationship problem will leave you perplexed. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* You may desire change, but listen to sound advice first. You'll be tempted to overspend, and personal obligations could get between you and success. Take care of the required paperwork before you move forward. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Participate in things, but don't feel like you have to limit what you want to do because someone else doesn't want to take part. An opportunity will unfold if you get involved in activities that excite you. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* It's time to stop procrastinating and get down to business. If you want something, it will be up to you to use your charm and intelligence to help you reach your destination. Make your dreams come true. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Don't get choked up over something that isn't that consequential. Overreacting will cause you to miss out on something special. Take a unique approach to life, friendship and creativity. Do your own thing. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* The best way to bring about change is to do it yourself. You may be questioned by someone who is unwilling to help, but don't let that stop you from doing what's best for you. Stand up and take ownership. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Don't overstep your boundaries when dealing with friends or relatives. Trying to control an unpredictable situation will be a waste of time. It's best to walk away from any matter that will leave you in a vulnerable position. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Refuse to let your emotions lead to extravagance or indulgent behavior. No matter who is involved, keeping the peace is in your best interest. Don't try to change others. Instead, look inward and start there. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Fitting in will require you to make a couple of changes. Before you move forward, consider whether you are ready to let go of what you are used to. Having an idea is one thing, but following through is another. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, creative and determined. You are bold and progressive.

To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	9					5		
4	6		3		2		9	7
		2		6		1		
	4		6		1		7	
		9				6		
	3		5		9		8	
		3		1		7		
6	1		8		5		2	4
	8						3	

Difficulty Level ★ 3/12

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

6	7	1	3	9	8	2	4	5
2	3	5	4	1	6	9	8	7
9	8	4	7	2	5	3	6	1
7	4	8	2	5	3	1	9	6
5	9	2	1	6	7	4	3	8
1	6	3	9	8	4	5	7	2
3	5	7	6	4	2	8	1	9
4	2	9	8	7	1	6	5	3
8	1	6	5	3	9	7	2	4

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 3/12

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

EMOTICON FACES Solution: 7 letters

C	C	C	D	E	T	N	I	O	P	P	A	S	I	D
O	G	O	H	I	L	A	R	I	O	U	S	S	S	E
N	R	N	N	E	V	O	L	W	I	N	K	E	Y	V
C	I	F	I	F	E	Z	E	E	N	S	U	C	T	I
E	N	O	N	G	U	K	I	S	S	G	L	N	A	L
R	N	U	I	D	G	S	Y	D	D	N	L	I	E	I
N	I	N	L	M	E	U	E	E	U	I	C	R	W	S
E	N	D	B	L	A	T	H	D	T	T	O	P	S	H
D	G	E	O	N	A	S	E	A	S	U	W	E	U	O
E	N	D	G	E	I	U	K	C	P	O	B	N	R	R
Y	O	E	S	N	C	T	G	M	T	P	O	S	P	N
O	L	U	O	L	Ⓢ	Ⓗ	Ⓨ	H	I	I	Y	I	R	S
N	A	T	O	O	R	E	P	P	I	Z	V	V	I	I
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Angel, Angry, Annoyed, Astonished, Baby, Cheeky, Clown, Concerned, Confounded, Confused, Cowboy, Detective, Devilish, Disappointed, Frowning, Ghost, Goblin, Grinning, Happy, Hilarious, Horns, Hugging, Kiss, Laughing, Long, Love, Mask, Nauseated, Pensive, Pouting, Princess, Shy, Sick, Skull, Sneeze, Stud, Surprise, Sweaty, Wink, Zipper

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Woods in title hunt; McIlroy bows out

PALM HARBOR, Fla. (AP)— Tiger Woods will go into the weekend of the Valspar Championship just two shots off the lead after a classy second-round performance in Florida.

Woods, making only the fourth start of his latest comeback from back surgery, made light of the tough conditions on the Copperhead Course at Innisbrook and fired a resolute 68 which lifted him to four under and into a share of the early clubhouse lead with Paul Casey, Brandt Snedeker and Ryan Palmer.

The quartet was later joined by Kelly Kraft, but overnight leader Corey Conners upstaged the big names with a battling 69 which put him two clear at the top of the leaderboard.

But Rory McIlroy's preparations for the Masters took a hit as he missed the halfway cut by two shots along with Jordan Spieth and Henrik Stenson.

The story of the day was again provided by Woods, who led outright when he made his fourth birdie of the round at the fifth - his 15th - before taking a little gloss off his performance with his lone bogey on his closing hole.

Woods made an uncertain start as he pulled his opening drive into the trees at the 10th, but he threaded his second back into play and saved par with a precise pitch to two feet before settling for a five at the long 11th.

But the 42-year-old got his first birdie on the card at the 12th when he converted a wedge approach to six feet, and a towering mid-iron to similar range at the par-three 13th set up back-to-back gains.

AP

Tiger Woods reacts after his birdie putt on the third hole during the third round of the Valspar Championship golf tournament Saturday, March 10, 2018, in Palm Harbor, Fla.

Woods missed further decent chances on the next two greens and safely negotiated the Snake Pit in level par to turn in 33, and the vast galleries following his group were cheering again as he holed from 12 feet for birdie at the second to earn a share of the lead.

And, after a good par save from sand at the fourth, Woods suddenly found himself alone at the top of the leaderboard when he splashed out of a greenside bunker to five feet at the long fifth and rattled in the putt for a four.

Woods stayed at five under with another clutch par putt from outside 10 feet at the seventh, but he failed to avoid dropping a shot at his final hole after a wayward approach ended up in a spectator's bag.

Paul Casey looks back on an excellent scrambling performance as a 68 lifted him into a share of the clubhouse lead at the Valspar Championship

His pitch from the back of the green flicked the pin and came to rest six feet beyond the hole before the par putt slid past on the left side.

Woods tapped in for bogey to settle for a share of the lead with Casey (68), Snedeker (68) and Palmer, whose six-birdie 66 was the low round of the tournament so far, while Kraft returned a 71 to make it a five-way tie for second.

The early leaders were eclipsed by Conners, who raced three shots ahead of the field with three birdies over his first seven holes before slipping back to five under when he bunkered his tee shot to the short fourth and then three-putted to run up a double-bogey five.

But the Canadian hauled one back with a sublime approach to tap-in range at the seventh and he parred safely in as he chases his maiden PGA Tour victory.

Justin Rose enjoyed a better ball-striking day as he hit back from an outward 37 with three birdies on the back nine to card a 69 which hoisted him to three under, while Ireland's Shane Lowry is a further two shots adrift as only 29 players completed 36 holes under par.

McIlroy, however, will have an unscheduled weekend off after he failed to build on an opening birdie - with three bogeys in four holes around the turn leaving him with a mountain to climb to make the weekend.

After slow free agent market, Moustakas re-signs with Royals

SURPRISE, Ariz. (AP)— There was an unexpected reunion in the Kansas City Royals' camp Saturday: Welcome back, sort of, Mike Moustakas.

After setting the Royals' single-season home run record with 38 last season, Moustakas filed for free agency. He rejected a $17.4 million qualifying offer in November.

The Royals had been grooming Cheslor Cuthbert as a replacement at third. Manager Ned Yost said he needed to find ways to get Cuthbert at least 500 plate appearances.

Moustakas, however, never received the multiyear, mega-million dollar contract he and his agent Scott Boras anticipated. The Royals signed Moustakas to a one-year $6.5 million contract this week with a mutual option for 2019. Moustakas can make another $2.2 million in incentives this year based on plate-appearances, beginning at 225.

"It's fortunate the way it happened for us the way it did," Royals general manager Dayton Moore said Saturday. "That's as simply as I can say it at this time."

Moustakas passed his physical and was in a Royals uniform again.

"It feels like I never left," he said. "It feels great to be back home. I'm excited to be back with the organization I grew up with. I got to see some familiar faces. It's always great to come into a clubhouse and everybody give you a hug. To have an opportunity to come back to Kansas City and play baseball again, it was a no-doubter, a no-brainer for me."

While first baseman Eric Hosmer got a rich deal in San Diego and outfielder Lorenzo Cain got a big contract in Milwaukee, Moustakas wound up with the Royals.

With less than two weeks before the March 29 opener with the Chicago White Sox, Moustakas was getting itchy to play again. He was in Newport Beach, California, and talked with Boras.

"Trying to figure out what's going on," Moustakas said.

Moustakas said with the regular season approaching, spring training winding down and the urge to play this season had "a lot" to do with his signing.

"I've sit for quite some time this spring training," he said.

Moore was happy to close the deal.

"Our fans are ecstatic that Moose is going to be back," Moore said. "We just can't wait to get to work together again to get going on the 2018 season. Anytime you add a talent like Mike Moustakas it helps. We simply don't go to back-to-back World Series and win a world championship without his contributions, without his ability to make plays."

Boras, who attended the press conference, was not so happy with the contract.

"Across the board, Moose dotted all the I's and T's of what excellence is in his performance," Boras said. "When you have a system that delays recognition of that and demand for that, you know and you have inherent notice that the flag's been raised. We've got to adjust that."

Right-handed starter Ian Kennedy, another Boras client, welcomed Moustakas back into the clubhouse.

"I know he was expecting a big, long contract," pitcher Ian Kennedy said. "I'm excited that we get to have him back for another year. It happened to work out that we have him for another year."

Sherman agrees to 3-year deal with 49ers

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Star cornerback Richard Sherman agreed to a three-year deal with the San Francisco 49ers on Saturday, one day after being released by the rival Seattle Seahawks.

Sherman confirmed in a text message that he agreed to the contract on Saturday after spending the day meeting with the team. ESPN reported that Sherman's deal is worth up to $39.15 million.

Sherman played an integral role in the fierce NFC West rivalry between Seattle and San Francisco earlier this decade. His deflection on a potential game-winning touchdown pass in the 2013 NFC championship game against the 49ers led to an interception that sent the Seahawks to the Super Bowl, which they won.

Sherman then celebrated a Thanksgiving night win in a road game against the 49ers the following season by eating a turkey leg on the 50-yard line.

Now, the player who was reviled so much by 49ers fans is joining their team after the Seahawks decided he wasn't worth his $13 million salary for 2018. San Francisco hopes he can make a big impact even as he turns 30 later this month and is coming off an Achilles tendon injury that cost him half of the 2017 season. Sherman also had a cleanup surgery on his opposite ankle during the offseason.

The 49ers had a glaring need at cornerback with 2017 third-round pick Ahkello Witherspoon and slot cornerback K'Waun Williams the only players under contract with extensive experience. The Niners believe Sherman can fill that role in a defense modeled by coordinator Robert Saleh after the one that had so much success in Seattle. Saleh was a former defensive assistant with the Seahawks.

Sherman became a star in Seattle, bringing a brash attitude and willingness to speak out on any topic to go along with his stellar play. His best seasons came in 2013 and 2014, when Seattle made two Super Bowl appearances, and he has 32 interceptions.

Sherman still was one of the better cornerbacks the past three seasons, ranking second in the NFL by allowing just 49.2 percent of passes against him to be caught, according to Pro Football Focus.

Sherman played his college ball in the Bay Area at Stanford under former coach Jim Harbaugh, who then went up against Sherman during his four seasons in charge of the 49ers.

Niners general manager John Lynch is also a Stanford alum and tweeted out a photo with Sherman.

Westbrook's triple-double lifts Thunder vs Spurs

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—That faint M-V-P chant wasn't for Russell Westbrook.

It was for 37-year-old forward Nick Collison.

Westbrook, the NBA's most valuable player last season, scored 21 points and posted his 19th triple-double of this season to help the Oklahoma City Thunder defeat the San Antonio Spurs 104-94 on Saturday night. Collison, a fan favorite who has been with the Thunder since the team moved from Seattle, stole the show.

Collison was pressed into action because starting center Steven Adams came down hard on his left ankle in the third quarter and did not return. Collison entered the game in the fourth quarter for the first time and responded by scoring all seven of his points in a 2:41 span in the fourth quarter for Oklahoma City.

Collison heard the chant and got a kick out of it.

"Sometimes, I feel like the walk-on in college games," he said.

Westbrook was glad to see Collison show he's still got it. Collison hadn't scored as many as seven points in a game since scoring seven on March 22, 2017, against Philadelphia.

"He puts in the work and he's always ready to go," Westbrook said. "Tonight was one of those nights where he got his number called and he answered like he does every time. It's a blessing to be on the floor with a guy like him. He's so unselfish. It's good to see."

Collison said he just tries to remember that he could be needed at any time. This time, it came in a key matchup between teams that are in the running for the No. 3 seed in the Western Conference.

"There has been a couple years for me where I haven't played much," he said. "I'm just trying to focus when I'm out there on what is actually going on. Trying not to let it get into my head too much that I haven't been out here in a long time—really just focus on the play in front of you. I've gotten better at that as I've gone on. You just have to stay ready."

Westbrook had 12 rebounds and 10 assists in the 98th triple-double of his career. Jerami Grant scored 15 points, Corey Brewer added 12, Paul George and Alex Abrines each scored 11 and Patrick Patterson had 10 for the Thunder, who improved to 6-3 since the All-Star break.

Rudy Gay and Davis Bertans each scored 14 points for the Spurs, who have lost eight of 10.

LaMarcus Aldridge was held to 11 points on 5-for-16 shooting

"They were very aggressive," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "They did a good job. He didn't have one of his best nights, that's for sure, but his effort was great. It just didn't work for him tonight, and OKC was a big part of that."

Brewer's corner 3-pointer in the closing seconds of the first half gave the Thunder a 52-43 lead. He led Oklahoma City with 10 points before the break.

Thunder center Steven Adams came down hard on his left ankle early in the third quarter and did not return. Without his presence on both ends of the floor, the Spurs quickly took advantage and cut Oklahoma City's lead to 62-58. The Thunder recovered after a timeout and led 77-68 after three quarters.

Collison took over in the early part of the fourth quarter. He made a reverse layup to make it 82-70, drew the fifth foul on Aldridge with 7:41 to play, then scored in close a minute later to give the Thunder an 89-72 lead.

The Spurs cut their deficit to seven with about two minutes to play, but Westbrook later clinched his triple-double on an assist to Grant for a 3-pointer that put the Thunder up 12.

AP

Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) goes to the basket between San Antonio Spurs guard Patty Mills (8) and forward Rudy Gay (22) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City, Saturday, March 10, 2018.

Mavericks 114, Grizzlies 80

In Dallas, Harrison Barnes scored 25 points and the Dallas Mavericks beat Memphis, extending the Grizzlies' losing streak to 17 games.

The Grizzlies (18-48), who have the longest losing streak in the NBA this season and the league's worst record, trailed by 26 points after shooting 26 percent in the first half and didn't lead after the 9:20 mark of the first quarter.

The only longer losing streaks in franchise history were skids of 23 and 19 games in the expansion season of 1995-96 in Vancouver. It's the longest losing streak in Memphis pro basketball history.

Dillon Brooks led the Grizzlies with 17 points.

The Mavericks (21-45), also among the NBA's worst teams, allowed their fewest points in any half this season while building a 56-30 halftime lead on the way to their largest margin of victory this season.

J.J. Barea scored 20 for Dallas, and Doug McDermott also had 20 for his highest total since coming to the Mavericks at the trading deadline.

"I like him," coach Rick Carlisle said of McDermott. "If you get him open and running around, he's going to make shots."

Memphis' JaMychal Green had his 12th double-double with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Dwight Powell of Dallas had his fourth with 15 points and 10 boards.

Heat 129, Wizards 102

In Miami, James Johnson scored 20 points, Wayne Ellington added 17 and the Miami Heat ran away in the third quarter to beat the Washington Wizards.

Tyler Johnson, Josh Richardson, Rodney McGruder and Kelly Olynyk all scored 13 for the Heat, who never trailed and outscored Washington 43-28 in the third. That was Miami's highest-scoring quarter in a regular-season contest since Oct. 30, 2013—394 games ago.

Dwyane Wade got the 8,000th field goal of his career in the first half, but left less than a minute into the fourth quarter with what was diagnosed as a mild left hamstring strain. He doesn't expect to play on Monday when the Heat start a three-game road trip in Portland.

Jodie Meeks scored 23 for the Wizards, whose five-game winning streak was snapped.

Hornets 122, Suns 115

In Charlotte, Dwight Howard had 30 points and 12 rebounds, Nic Batum flirted with a triple-double and the Charlotte Hornets held on to beat the Phoenix Suns to snap a five-game losing streak.

Batum added 29 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists and Marvin Williams chipped in with 16 points as the Hornets won despite nearly squandering a 22-point fourth quarter lead to a Suns team playing without star Devin Booker.

The Hornets led by eight at halftime and seemed ready to put this one on cruise control after outscoring the Suns 35-21 in the third quarter behind 14 points from Batum. But Phoenix wouldn't go away. The Suns cut the lead to two with less than a minute to go, but Howard and Batum each added two clutch free throws down the stretch to secure the win for Charlotte.

Clippers 113, Magic 105

In Los Angeles, Lou Williams scored 25 points and Tobias Harris had 21, as the Los Angeles Clippers pulled away in the fourth quarter for a victory over the Orlando Magic.

The Clippers moved a half-game ahead of Denver and Utah in the race for the final Western Conference playoff spot.

Jonathan Simmons led Orlando with 24 points. D.J. Augustin added 19 and Nikola Vucevic had 17 points and 10 rebounds.

DeAndre Jordan had 18 rebounds for the Clippers, and Milos Teodosic added 15 points and seven assists.

Leonard may return for Spurs on Thursday

TEXAS (AP)—San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard could return as early as Thursday against the New Orleans Pelicans.

If he is able to return next week, it will mark a big step in a saga that has seen Leonard miss a surprising amount of time with a lingering quad injury surrounded by reports that he has had disagreements with team doctors over how to handle the injury and speculation that there was discord with the team.

Leonard played nine games after missing the first 27 games of the season with the leg injury, but went back to the sideline on Jan. 13th and hasn't played since.

Head coach Gregg Popovich told reporters in February that he did not expect Leonard to return this season. Just days later, ESPN reported that Leonard, who had been in New York seeking a second opinion on his injury, planned to return.

"I'll be surprised if he returns this season," Popovich said on Feb. 21. "We only have X number of games left in the season, and he's still not ready to go. If by some chance he is, it's going to be pretty late into the season. It's going to be a tough decision. How late do you bring somebody back? I'm just trying to be honest and logical. I'd be surprised if he gets back this year."

Leonard confirmed last week with reporters his intent to return to the court this season and expressed a desire to remain in San Antonio for the rest of his career.

"The progression that I'm making has been great," Leonard told reporters. "[The pain] is diminishing. It's hard to explain, but I'm definitely better. I feel better, and I'm feeling more comfortable."

Meanwhile, in Boston, the Celtics announced on Saturday that wing Jaylen Brown suffered a concussion during a frightening fall Thursday against the Minnesota Timberwolves where he slipped off the rim and fell on his head and neck.

He will miss Sunday's game against the Indiana Pacers, but the good news is that he did not suffer any further damage to his body.

MassLive.com reports that Brown underwent testing on his neck and back and that head coach Brad Stevens does not expect him to play at all in the next week.

The Target Center crowd went silent with players on both benches showing concern when Brown took the fall and remained on the court for several minutes. Medics brought out a stretcher for Brown, but he was eventually able to get to his feet and walk off the court with assistance.

KMA versus Watch & Learn in Rocball finals

Watch & Learn, left, and Kiss My Ace players pose for a photo after winning their respective semis matches in the 2018 Rocbal League at the Marianas High School court. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The championship game in the 2018 Rocball League will be played by Watch & Learn, a team made up of teachers and staff of MHS and Kiss My Ace (KMA). KMA is a team of senior high School students who have been playing Rocball ever since they were freshmen at MHS.

KMA defeated Sai Ki So 46 to 21 in their semifinal game to advance to the title match. Watch & Learn, on the other hand, defeated Fam Bam by "juicing out" in Rocball's quarter/set system of play where a team can win with most points scored in four sets. The finals date has yet to be scheduled.

KMA's only loss of the season was against Watch & Learn. Both of these teams know how to play the served ball at the net. Unlike volleyball, a tamer version of this kind of team net sport, front line players are allowed to spike down a served ball. In Rocball jargon a spiked down serve is called a "jam" and KMA is the best team this year for the "jam."

In two point backcourt scoring, Watch & Learn is the best team for making what Rocball players know as the "kee." The kee is when the person playing the goalie's position scores from behind the 10-foot line.

For three-point goals, KMA has the edge but not by much. KMA has more penalty serves than Watch & Learn, but has a slight advantage in the two point ace serves. Both teams have very good spikers and know how and when to dink.

Blatter: North American bid 'afraid' to lose 2026 World Cup

ZURICH (AP)—The North American bid to host the 2026 World Cup now seems "afraid" of losing to Morocco, former FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

A change in strategy this week gave the leaders of the American, Canadian and Mexican soccer federations equal status in a bid that has been heavily favored to win the hosting rights on June 13 in Moscow. The reshuffle reduced the role of previous bid chairman Sunil Gulati, the most senior American in FIFA who served on the soccer body's executive committee under Blatter.

"They give the impression that they are not any longer very sure that they will win, that's my impression," Blatter said. "But I don't know why they are afraid."

Last month, Blatter wrote on Twitter that Morocco was the "logical host" of the 2026 tournament. FIFA preferred single-nation World Cup hosts under Blatter's leadership.

Still, Blatter declined to fully endorse Morocco's ability to host a 48-team tournament alone. The 2026 edition will have the 16 extra teams wanted by Blatter successor Gianni Infantino, who supports multi-nation bids.

"I don't know if the Moroccans are able to organize a World Cup of 48," Blatter told invited reporters at a briefing in Zurich related to his own legal issues.

Both bids will formally submit plans next week. A FIFA-appointed panel will then evaluate the candidates and publicly score them for potential organizational and commercial risks.

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victories over Mimi Zhang, 11-6, 12-10, 11-4, and Amir Malik, 11-7, 13-11, 11-8. Malik booted out Park Taewon, 10-12, 11-9, 11-6, 11-6, 11-8, to advance against Liu, at the upper half of the draw.

At the lower half, Cheng made it to the finals after winning over Quiang Gao, 11-6, 11-4, 11-7, Ieh Hyun Ahn, 11-9, 11-5, 11-5, and Budhi Gurumng, 6-11, 11-3, 11-9, 11-7. Gurung marched into the Final Four following his victories against Yun Zhang, 11-6, 11-2, 11-4, and Mario Espeleta, 11-5, 11-4, 11-7, while the latter won over Kim Gijo, 6-11, 6-11, 11-8, 13-11, 11-4. Ahn topped Song Zhen Liu, 4, 11-, 11-7, 11-3, 12-10, before losing to Cheng.

The local table tennis group will choose players that will represent the CNMI to the Micro Games in Yap from the participants in the qualifier. The federation, which is trying to revive the sport in the Commonwealth, will field eight athletes in the quadrennial meet that will run from July 15 to 28,

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50K runners headed up north as far as Banzai Cliff and also climbed to Capitol Hill (just before turning to Mt. Tapochao Road) before heading south via Beach Road up to the Pacific Islands Club.

"I caught up with her near the fire station (Garapan) when we were about to turn to AMP. I knew she was tired because she's slowing down and sweating a lot as she could really feel the hot weather," said Berger, who was used to racing under the searing Saipan sun, having won Saipan Marathon five times (the most by any participant) and the 50K three times, including last Saturday's event.

Berger topped the Saipan Marathon in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2016, and ruled the 50K in 2013 and 2014. She just competed in the 10K last year and finished second. Muramatsu is no stranger to Saipan Marathon, too as the 2013 Mt. Fuji Marathon champion in fact finished second to Berger in the 2012 race (full marathon).

"She is a tough competitor, but I guessed I am just more familiar with the course and the weather here, so I was able to finish ahead of her in the last part of the race," said Berger, who hugged her 41-year-old foe after the latter crossed the finish line..

Joining Berger and Muramatsu in the Top 6 overall rankings in the women's division were Yuko Muto (4:42:54), Saipan's Sakiko Eda (5:13:15), Noriko Nakai (6:00:05), and Rika Katsuki (6:09:44).

Meanwhile, Japanese Abe Masayuki was the No. 1 overall finisher and ruled the men's 50K for the third straight time. Masayuki clocked in at 3:33:27 to prevail against China's Qingtan Chen (3:44:11), compatriots Kota Matsuhira (3:59:15), Yasushi Tomizawa (4:44:23), and Hiroyuki Miyoshi (4:44:35), and China's Rong Ni (4:48:35).

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well together, holding their own against GCA 2's Sam Ryu and Steven Balakrishna in the battle on the net. The rest of Knights' players on the court—Noreen Vidal, Fiona Bucalig, and Mariana Tenorio—also played steady, setting up their spikers and chasing the ball at the back row.

With Mt. Carmel just a set away from completing an upset over the favored GCA 2, Eagles coach Caesar Libut tried to calm his players down, telling them not to panic and instead settle down and play their game.

"They have to concentrate on their game and not get carried away with the crowd and their emotions. I reminded them to do what we have been doing in practices and in the games that we won—that is to keep their focus and believe they can do it," Libut said.

After the pep talk with their coach, the Eagles came out strong and jumped to a 9-2 lead with Balakrishna peppering Mt. Carmel with spikes. Then just when spectators thought GCA 2 would pull away, the Knights clawed their way back into the game, moving within 2, 7-9. Toves scored 3 points in the comeback off a spike, block, and tip, while the rest of MCS 1's points came off GCA 2's wide returns.

That was the closest that the Knights could get, as it was all an Eagles show after that with Balakrishna finishing what he started, as he gave GCA 2 the last 2 points in the second set with his first one off a block on Toves' dump and the last from a spike with the ball heading to the back row and dropping to an unguarded spot.

With Balakrishna towing GCA 2 to the win, the finals went to a third set.

Mt. Carmel went on to have a good start in the deciding set, as it built a 3-0 lead. Diaz scored MCS 2's first point as his return hit the sideline, while Toves made it two in a row with his kill, and Steele followed it up with an ace. With GCA 2 failing to counter, Libut was force to call an early timeout to wake his team up.

The lull worked for the Eagles, as Balakrishna was at it again with those booming spikes and a couple of blocks with the one against the much smaller Diaz giving GCA 2 its first taste of the lead in the set, 8-7.

After that 15th point, teams-switched sides and it was a nip and tuck game after that, giving supporters from both camps anxious moments.

At this juncture, neither team led by more than 2 points and there were several lead changes. GCA 2 moved 2 points away from wrapping up the finals, 13-11, when Balakrishna fooled MCS 1's defense as he seemed to be going for a spike, but decided to tip the ball that fell on the front row with no Knights player available to receive it.

However, Mt. Carmel made up for the defensive lapse when Toves went for a spike and then followed Balakrishna cue, as he also tipped the ball instead of another spike and that caught Kian Pajarillaga napping at the front row.

With the match tied for the nth time, 13-all, Libut called his last time out and when the game resumed, GCA 2 went to its bread and butter play—Balakrishna spiking. The lanky player hit one and Toves attempted for a block, but was unsuccessful as the ball hit the latter's hands and then off to the sideline, boosting GCA 2's title hopes

However, the Knights refused to give up with Toves countering Balakrishna's spike with a tip to force another standoff, 14-all.

The battle on the net continued and this time, it was Sam Ryu who let go of a spike and again Toves failed to block it, as GCA came knocking on the door to the Promised Land again, 15-14. Ryu tried to close out the match with another spike, but his shot went wide off to the back row, allowing the Knights to knot the count anew, 15-all.

That was the last deadlock, as the Eagles got the two needed points to end Mt. Carmel's gallant stand. GCA 2 took the first point off Toves' wide serve, while Ryu finally wrapped up the match as his spike went to the back row and Toves was not squared off yet for a return.

2018 Frank M. Diaz Memorial Youth League

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The 670 Sonics' Raven Francisco, center, drives against two Ol'Aces Extreme defenders during their boys U15 division game in the opening day of the 2018 Frank M. Diaz Memorial Youth League early this month at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The 670 Sonics' Tony Kim, left, stretches for a layup against the Ol'Aces Extreme' Donavin Deleon Guerrero.

Ol'Aces Extreme and 670 Sonics players battle for the rebound.

The Ol'Aces Extreme's Darryl Soriano, left, challenges the jumper of the 670 Sonics' Dan Albert Puri.

The 670 Sonics' Aldriane Galang pulls up for a jumper.

Two Ol'Aces Extreme defenders sandwich the 670 Sonics' Raven Francisco.

The 670 Sonics' Stephen Bartolo, left, eludes his defender for a point-blank shot.

The Ol'Aces Extreme's Leo Naraja, left, deflects a pass intended for a 670 Sonics player at the baseline.

Woods in title hunt; McIlroy bows out

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Triumphant return for Mami

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Mamiko Berger celebrates her first place finish in the 50K event in last Saturday's 2018 Saipan Marathon.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Mamiko Berger was so familiar with the course and weather condition at the 2019 Saipan Marathon that even a formidable opponent could not prevent her from winning her favorite race last Saturday.

SAIPAN MARATHON 2018

The former Saipan resident had a triumphant return to the island as she timed in at 4:10:02 in the 50K event and won over Japanese Natsuko Muramatsu, who reached the finish line just less than two minutes behind Berger after submitting 4:11:42.

"It's great to be back and win. I am happy to see old friends and thankful to them for their support," said Berger, who crossed the finish line at the American Memorial Park in her trademark smile.

The Thailand-based Berger had a close fight with Muramatsu right from the get-go and they switched lead several times.

"I let her past me uphill up north (Marpi area and Capitol Hill) because I know I could catch up on her once we reached the flat course (south side)," the 48-year-old Berger said.

Berger and the 30 other

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Grace Christian Academy 2's Steven Balakrishna goes up for a spike during the deciding third set of their title game against Mt. Carmel School 1 in the middle school division of the 2017-2018 Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Association Volleyball League last Friday at the GCA court in Navy Hill.

GCA 2 survives thrilling finale

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Grace Christian Academy 2 and Mt. Carmel School 1 showed how a championship game should be played as they kept the spectators on the edge of their seats before the Eagles escaped with a three-set win in the middle school finale of the 2017-2018 Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Association Volleyball League last Friday at the GCA court in Navy Hill.

It was a come-from-behind win for GCA 2, as the Knights prevailed in the opening set, 25-22, threatening to end the Eagles unbeaten season. The Eagles regrouped after the stunning loss and the swept the last two, 25-10, 17-15, to clinch the division crown and finish this year's competition undefeated. GCA 2 won all its 13 matches in the regular season and then eliminated MCS 2 and Agape Christian School to set up a finals showdown against MC1, which made it to the title game after ousting Seventh-Day Adventist School and GCA 1.

The underdogs Knights went on to catch the GCA 2 off guard in the opening set with a 3-point win. Merrick Toves, Richard Steele, and Jeremiah Diaz worked

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Micro Games veteran delivers in qualifier

MICRO GAMES 2018 MORE THAN JUST GAMES

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Micronesian Games gold medalist Jean Shi lived up to high expectations as she topped the Northern Marianas Table Tennis Federation Qualifying Tournament held early this month at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Shi, who handed the CNMI gold medals in the 2010 Micronesian Games in Palau, ruled the 2018 Micro Games qualifier after outclassing Charlie Cheng in the finals, 11-7, 11-7, 7-11, 11-7. Shi won all her games in the one-day tournament, beating Su Yongdong first, 11-7, 11-4, 8-11, 11-9, before eliminating fellow Micro Games veterans Steve Lim, 11-4, 11-3, 11-5, and Bright Lui , 13-11, 11-7, 11-9.

Lim set a second round duel against Shi after ousting Roman Babauta, 11,9, 11-4, 11-9, while Lui moved into the semifinals following his

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Jean Shi, right, poses with other participants and organizers of the Northern Marianas Table Tennis Federation Qualifying Tournament held early this month at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.